GOD OF THE GATE, PROTECTOR OF THE DOOR: DOOR GODS (MENSHEN) IN CHINESE POPULAR RELIGION

by

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Abstract

The door plays an important part in religious rituals and beliefs throughout many cultures and thus is often considered to be the residence of some spirit or is appointed a special protective deity. In China, door gods are called menshen and are associated with the lunar New Year celebration. They are pictures of mythological or deified historical figures placed on double-leaf gates or single-leaf doors to guard against evil influences. Sometimes, door prints depict mythological beasts, tigers, roosters, or exorcistic symbols, all of which are believed to provide protection from evil. There are also auspicious door prints which express the desire to attain wealth and prosperity, to give birth to a son, or to pass the civil service examination.

Past studies of door gods have primarily focused on their artistic evolution and characteristics in the form of Chinese woodblock New Year prints. This study focuses on the role of door gods as deities in Chinese popular religion, ritual, and the New Year festival celebration concentrating primarily on literary evidence instead of artistic. It shows that door gods are not just printed images, but possess 'personality' and 'emotion'. I provide annotated translations or summaries of relevant short stories, tales, poems, popular novels, and dramas in which door gods play a role. I also briefly discuss the current use of door gods in the People's Republic of China based on the fieldwork and observations of myself and various scholars.

The major conclusions reached in the thesis are: (1) there is no direct evidence supporting the belief that modern-day door gods evolved directly from or supplanted the five tutelary deities of first century BCE China; (2) Qin Qiong (?-638) and Yuchi Jingde (585-658) did not supplant the mythological door guardians Shen Tu and Yu Lei; (3) there is evidence to support the belief that door gods did receive sacrificial offerings; and, (4) only through the combination of literary and artistic evidence will the history and evolution of this deity be fully understood by future scholars.
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CHAPTER I Introduction

Often the dwelling place of a spirit or divinity, the door has almost invariably a sacred character. The origin of the latter is perhaps best sought in the conception of the door as separating between two worlds -- the outside world, where are innumerable hostile influences and powers, and the region within the limits of the house, the influences and powers of which are friendly. The door is at once the barrier against those hostile influences, and that which gives entrance to those who have a right to pass to the sacred region within.

The above quotation comes from an entry on the door in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics published in 1912. This article written by J. A. MacCulloch is still an excellent summary of the ritual and religious significance of the door in many cultures throughout the world and throughout history. MacCulloch proposes that because the doorway poses a dividing line between the evils of the outside realm and the safety of homes or temples, the doorway initially was a sacred entity independent of its representation as a spirit or god. However, he suggests that the belief that the doorway is the residence of some spirit or god increases the sacredness of the door.

In Chinese culture, door gods are generally referred to as menshen. They are paired pictures of mythological or deified historical figures placed on gates or doors to guard against evil influences. Traditionally, Chinese gates were double-leaved and one

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2MacCulloch vol. 4, 846.
of the pair was placed on each leaf. The use of door gods became associated with the New Year festival (in the People’s Republic of China commonly called Spring Festival, *chunjie* 春節), which begins on the first day of the first lunar month and ends on the fifteenth. As early as the middle of the first century, based on a passage from Cai Yong’s *Du duan* 獨斷, door gods have been associated with this festival. Either on New Year’s eve or on New Year’s day, depictions of door gods would be replaced with fresh depictions for the coming year.³

The earliest account of a pair of protective door deities draws upon a legend recounted in *Lun heng* 論衡 by Wang Chong 王充 (27-ca. 100) describing two deities Shen Tu 神荼 and Yu Lei 鬱垒. Wang Chong attributes the passage to the *Shan haijing* 山海經 (ca. 3rd century BCE) but this passage has been lost from the version which survives today. According to the legend, Shen Tu and Yu Lei stood guard over the Gate of Demons (*gui men* 鬼門) which was located under a giant peach tree on Dushuo 度朔 Mountain, in the Eastern Sea (Donghai 東海). They would use rush ropes to catch any demons who exited through this gate and then feed them to tigers. Consequently, the Yellow Thearch (Huangdi 黃帝) created an exorcistic ritual whereby peachwood images of Shen Tu and Yu Lei were placed outside gates, tigers were painted on doors and rush ropes were hung above entrances as protective measures. This custom seems to have been widely adopted among the populace because several Han dynasty texts describe this ritual.

During the period of the Sui (581-618), the Tang (618-907), and the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960), the practice of placing images of Shen Tu

³Specific source references will be cited when this evidence is discussed in detail in the following chapters.
and Yu Lei, peachwood charms, and images of tigers continued in conjunction with sacrifices to the five tutelary spirits. During this time, we find the beginning of the legend of Zhong Kui 鍾馗, the demon-queller. It became a common practice during the Tang for the emperor to present paintings of Zhong Kui to his ministers during the New Year celebration. In addition, based on excerpts from the tenth century anthology, *Tai ping guang ji 太平廣記*, we find the earliest surviving reference to door gods in fictional tales attributable to now lost Tang dynasty texts.

The earliest evidence supporting the mass use and mass production of door gods is found in both literary and artistic sources dating from the Song Dynasty (960-1279). This is also the period when inexpensive printing developed and private printers became active. Evidence for the custom of pasting up door gods during the New Year festival can definitely be seen in the painting *Sui zhao tu 歲朝圖* by Li Song 李嵩 (1166-1243). The painting depicts the New Year celebration. A door god is visible on a leaf of the outer gate (the other side of the gate is not visible) dressed in military attire. Two door gods wearing civil attire can be seen on the inner doors of the house. The *Dong jing meng hua lu 東京夢華錄* by Meng Yuanlao 孟元老 (fl. 1126-1147), the *Meng liang lu 夢梁錄* written in 1274 by Wu Zimu 吳自牧, and the *Wu lin jiu shi 武林舊事* by Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298) all provide vivid descriptions of the New Year celebration and describe the sale of door god prints, protective charms, and prints of Zhong Kui prior to the start of the new year. These texts reveal that the use and sale of door god prints and other protective prints were already very popular by the Song dynasty.

Through the influence of Yuan (1264-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasty popular novels and dramas, other historical and legendary figures joined the pantheon of
protective door deities. The two Tang dynasty generals, Qin Qiong 秦瓊 (?-638) and Yuchi Jingde 尉遲敬德 (585-658), appeared as door gods in a chapter of the 1592 edition of *The Journey to the West* (*Xi you ji* 西遊記). A shorter account of the *Journey to the West* version appears in the *San jiao yuan liu sou shen da quan* 三教源流搜神大全 which, according to the preface, is a 1909 reprint of a Ming dynasty (1368-1644) edition of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) version of the *Hua xiang sou shen guang ji* 畫像搜神廣記. However, the inclusion of this legend in the *Hua xiang sou shen guang ji* is debatable. Briefly, the tale states that the Tang emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626-649) could not sleep because he was being disturbed by demons. Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde volunteered to stand guard outside his bedchamber and protect him from the demons. As a result, the emperor was able to sleep without any disturbances. The emperor, not wanting to further trouble the two generals, commissioned an artist to paint their likenesses to be attached to the two leaves of his gate. After this, the emperor remained unmolested by demons. Subsequently, Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde were regarded as door gods. Other historical figures also portrayed as door gods include Gao Chong 高寵 (dates unknown) and Yang Zaixing 揚再興 (Southern Song dynasty), Zhang Xianzhong 張獻忠 (1606-1646) and Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606-1645), and Guan Gong 關公 (?-220) and Zhang Fei 張飛 (?-221). One can still find these individuals portrayed in modern-day door god prints in addition to protective door deities with Marxist and socialist themes.

Past studies of door gods have often analyzed them based on the artistic study of Chinese woodblock New Year prints. In order to understand door gods and their role in the Chinese religious pantheon I have opted to devise a preliminary classification scheme for door guardian figures. Door guardian figures protect three main
architectural structures: the family household, the temple, and the tomb. Lumping together the deities that protect these structures is often done but there are subtle differences between them that make differentiation analytically appropriate. Thus, I propose the preliminary classification scheme below.

I. The Door Protectors of the Home

A. The Spirit of the Gate and the Door. The *Liji* (ca. first century BCE) makes references to the “five tutelary household deities” -- the inner door (*hu* 戶), the stove (*zao* 灶), the impluvium (*zhong liu* 中霤), the outer gate (*men* 門), and the lane (*xing* 行). These were considered to be spirits and thus received sacrifices, although

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5 English translation of the term according to Tjoe Som Tjan, *Po Hu T'ung: The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, 2 vols., Sinica Leidensia Vol. 6, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, vol. 1 1949 & vol. 2 1952) 2: 376. *Liu* is defined as ‘the dripping of water (rain, etc.) from the eaves’ thus, the term literally means ‘central eaves from which rainwater drips’. *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1976) defines impluvium as, “A cistern or tank in the atrium or peristyle of a house of ancient Rome to receive the water falling through the compluvium,” (p. 1135). A compluvium is defined as, “A Square opening in the roof of the ancient Roman atrium toward which the roof sloped and through which the rain fell into the impluvium,” (p. 465). Tjan’s use of the term ‘impluvium’ is misleading because it implies a Roman architectural structure. According to the *Bai hu tong*, quoting the *Yue ling* section of the *Liji*, “The impluvium (*zhongliu*) resembles [a mound] of earth in the center [of the house], (see p. 16 of the thesis).
there is no reference as to how they were portrayed. One can assume that the sacrifices were offered at the respective architectural location. Many scholars consider the spirit of the inner door and the outer gate to be the ancestors of the modern day door gods. However, there is no direct evidence linking the two nor evidence proving a direct evolutionary line. In fact, it is possible to translate the term *menshen* as found in a number of tales as 'god of the door' and not as 'door gods'. Textual evidence does support sacrifices to the five tutelary household spirits at the same time that people were posting door god depictions. This evidence does not support the belief that depictions of door guardians supplanted the worship of the inner door and the outer gate. In fact, this thesis will prove that sacrifices to the door were practiced into the Qing dynasty. Door gods may have evolved as an anthropomorphization of the spirit of the inner door and outer gate, as did all the tutelary household deities, but evidence supports the fact that the spirit of the inner door and the outer gate coexisted with the forerunners of modern day door gods.

**B. Exorcistic Door Guardians.** In this category I include the door gods Shen Tu and Yu Lei as well as the figure Zhong Kui, who is often depicted as a door god by using mirror images on a double-leaf gate of or by pasting a single depiction of him on a door. These exorcistic door guardians share several common characteristics. According to the legends, these figures not only deter ghosts and other noxious influences but they possess the ability to physically attack and seize the offensive spirits and destroy them. Second, these figures are mythical. Some scholars propose that Shen

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6All of the tutelary household deities mentioned in the *Liji* eventually were depicted in human form.

For studies on the stove god see Robert L. Chard, "Master of the Family: History and Development of the Chinese Cult to the Stove" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1990). Examples of stove god prints may be found in Po 23-59. For the god of the lane or alley see Wang Shucun, *Paper Joss* 108, 110. For a print of the god of the well see Po 78-79.
Tu and Yu Lei evolved from two plants that were believed to have exorcistic properties. Some scholars suggest that the term ‘zhongkui’ was actually the name of an exorcistic weapon. Third, these characters play important roles in the yearly exorcism rituals and procession.

C. Household Door Gods. In this category I include both deified historical figures and numerous references to generic door gods. They are usually paired figures who through legends, dramas, or popular novels have been adopted as door gods. They differ mainly from the exorcistic door guardians discussed in I.B. in that their legends only tell of their ability to scare off or deter ghosts. Their legends contain nothing about them having the ability to physically apprehend or destroy evil spirits. Sometimes, they directly interact with ghosts, demons, monsters, or divine foxes, and even mortals, but the majority of the time they are still defensive in nature merely expelling the intruder. The majority of the historical figures are famous generals whose legends praise their military prowess and moral standards. Therefore it is fitting that a powerful military general in full battle armor be a defender.

D. Door Prints. These constitute auspicious prints expressing the desire for wealth, longevity, high scores on examinations, a male heir, or other aspects of general prosperity. Occasionally other deities, such as the Civil and Military Gods of Wealth, would be used as door prints. These generally differ from the usage in I.C. because the door gods are represented as civil officials instead of military officials. Wang Shucun 王樹村 also differentiates between the military and civil door gods and refers to the civil prints as “door lads” (men tong 門童). These are pasted on the door of the inner courtyard or on doors to rooms within the house. Wang classifies them into two types.
The first he refers to as “door lads” or “golden lads” (jin tong zi 金童子). These are auspicious prints of chubby babies or children. The second he refers to as “door prints” (men hua 門畫) and often depict individuals dressed in the court clothing of a celestial official or the flower decorated robes (cha hua 插花) and hats (sha mao 紗帽) worn by the Principal Graduate (zhuang yuan 状元), an individual who scored highest on the civil service recruitment examination.7

E. Protective Animals or Symbols. These include prints or carvings of animals or symbols believed to possess exorcistic properties. These include the cock, the tiger, the lion, poplar or pine branches, Eight Diagram symbols (bagua 八卦), mirrors, or other auspicious symbols used as protective prints on doors.

II. Temple Guardians. These include deities who have been adopted as protectors of temples; their images are carved or painted on temple gates. These include many of the figures in I.A. and I.B. but there are also a number of legends concerning individuals who have been entrusted to defend Buddhist or Daoist temples. However, it is rare to find these figures in New Year prints posted in a family’s home.8

III. Tomb Guardians. These are figures depicted on tomb entrances. They are not the door gods associated with temples or households. The terminology used to describe or denote them is not the same as that used to describe the two aforementioned classes of protectors. They are carved in stone and do not receive offerings, nor are they changed during the New Year festival.

7 Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu 1: 35.
This thesis will primarily focus on the door god as protector of the household. It will also cover the role of door gods as deities in Chinese religion, ritual, and the New Year festival celebration. Although door gods are only minor deities in the Chinese pantheon, they still play an important role in the daily lives of the people. It is my goal to show that door gods are not just printed images, but possess personality and emotion. Examples from literary sources show that door gods interact with both deities and humans. There are stories of door gods preventing ghosts from entering a household and stories of ghosts outwitting the door gods. Door gods bicker with each other, attend celebrations hosted by other deities, and become offended when an artist carelessly paints their image. To demonstrate this, I will provide annotated translations of tales which explain why certain individuals were regarded as door gods. I will also analyze several stories from Li Fang’s 李昉 (925-996) Tai ping guang ji, Hong Mai’s 洪邁 (1123-1202) Yi jian zhi 夷堅志, and Yuan Mei’s 袁枚 (1716-1798) Zi bu yu 子不語 in which door gods play an active role. I will also look at a number of Ming and Qing dynasty dramas and popular novels in which stories surrounding various historical figures have led to their use as door gods. Finally, I will discuss the current use of door gods in the People’s Republic of China based on the fieldwork and observations of various scholars.

As a final note, unless another romanization system is used in a direct quote, the pinyin romanization system is used throughout the thesis. All governmental titles, where possible, have been translated according to Charles O. Hucker’s A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (1985). Chinese characters have been omitted from the
footnote references but are included in the bibliography.
CHAPTER II Door Gods From the Pre-Han Through the Fifth Century

2.1 The Inner Door and the Outer Gate among the Five/Seven Tutelary Spirits

The first account of ritual observances toward the door is recorded in the *Liji* (ca. first century BCE). In it are described sacrifices made to the "five tutelary spirits" (*wu si*). The first reference to the five tutelary spirits is found in the *Qu li* 簡禮 chapter of the *Liji* which states:

> The Son of Heaven offers sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, [the spirits of] the four cardinal points, [the spirits of] the mountains and rivers, and the five tutelary spirits, throughout the course of the year. The feudal lords offer sacrifices within their own territories to [the spirits of] the mountains and rivers and to the five tutelary spirits, throughout the course of the year. The grand masters offer sacrifices to the five tutelary spirits, throughout the course of the year. The servicemen offer sacrifices to their ancestors.9

Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127-200) commentary for this section states, "As for the five tutelary household spirits, they are the inner door (*hu*), the stove (*zao*), the impluvium (*zhong liu*), the outer gate (*men*), and the lane (*xing*)."10 This differs from Zheng Xuan’s definition found in the commentary to the *Wang zhi* 王制 chapter of the *Liji*. The relevant section of the *Wang zhi* chapter is as follows:

> As for the sacrifices offered in the ancestral temple by the Son of Heaven and the feudal lords, the spring [sacrifice] is called Yue 祀, the summer

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10*Liji* 5.24a
[sacrifice] is called Di 祀, the autumn [sacrifice] is called Chang 祭, and the
winter [sacrifice] is called Zheng 祲. The Son of Heaven offers sacrifices to
Heaven and Earth, the feudal lords offer sacrifices to the God of the Soil
and Millet, and the grand masters offer sacrifices to the five tutelary
spirits.  

Here Zheng Xuan’s commentary differs, stating, “The five tutelary spirits are the
Overseer of Destiny (si ming 司命), the impluvium, the outer gate, the lane, and ghosts
without ancestors.”^12 I have yet found no reason to explain why Zheng Xuan differs in
his description of the five tutelary spirits.

The Yue ling 月令 chapter gives us some idea as to when the sacrifices to the inner
door and outer gate occurred. The appropriate sacrifice for the first, second, and third
month of spring (i.e., the first, second, and third months of the year) was to the inner
door.^13 The appropriate sacrifice for the first, second, and third month of autumn (i.e.,
the seventh, eighth, and ninth months of the year) was to the outer gate.^14 Later in the
Yue ling chapter it states that in the first month of winter (i.e., the tenth month of the
year),

The Son of Heaven then prays to his ancestors in heaven for [a prosperous]
coming year. A great sacrificial slaughter is offered to the local god of the
soil as well as to [the spirit of] the village gate. On the La 獄 day [sacrifices
are made to] the early ancestors and to the five tutelary spirits. Workers
and farmers use this as a time to rest. 

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^1 Liji 12.22b/Legge, Li Chi 1: 224-225.
^2 Liji 12.22b.
^3 Liji 14.8a/Legge, Li Chi 1: 251; 15.2b/Legge, Li Chi 1: 258; 15.14b/Legge, Li Chi 1: 262, respectively.
^4 Liji 16.25a/Legge, Li Chi 1: 283; 16.29a/Legge, Li Chi 1: 287; 17.1b/Legge, Li Chi 1: 291, respectively.
Here, Zheng Xuan’s commentary states that the five tutelary spirits are the outer gate, the inner door, the impluvium, the stove, and the lane.\textsuperscript{16}

There is also minor reference to the five tutelary spirits in the \textit{Zeng zi} 曾子 chapter. When an heir to the throne is born, his name is announced to the five tutelary spirits.\textsuperscript{17} There is also mention that the sacrifice to the five tutelary spirits should be postponed if the Son of Heaven or his wife dies and should not be resumed until they are buried.\textsuperscript{18}

In contrast, the \textit{Ji fa} 祭法 chapter of the \textit{Liji} makes reference to the “seven tutelary spirits” (\textit{qi si} 七祀):

The king, on behalf of the people, establishes [sacrifices] for seven tutelary spirits: one for the Controller of Destiny; one for the [spirit of the] impluvium; one for the [spirits of the] gates of the capital; one for the [spirits of the] roads of the capital; one for the ghost of the ancient rulers who do not have ancestors; one for the [spirit of the] inner door; and one for the [spirit of the] stove. The king personally performs [the sacrifice] to the seven tutelary spirits. The feudal lords, on behalf of the nation, establish [sacrifices] for five tutelary spirits: one for the Controller of Destiny; one for the [spirit of the] impluvium; one for the [spirits of the] gates of the capital; one for the [spirits of the] roads of the capital; and one for the ghosts of feudal lords who do not have ancestors. The feudal lords personally perform [the sacrifice] to the five tutelary spirits. The grand

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Liji} 17.20a/Legge, \textit{Li Chi} 1: 300. The \textit{La} was an annual festival, celebrated during the twelfth lunar month (based on the Han calendar), which celebrated the end of the old agricultural cycle and the beginning of the new. See Bodde, \textit{Festivals} 49-74.
\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Liji} 17.20a.
\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Liji} 18.5a/Legge, \textit{Li Chi} 1: 313.
\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Liji} 19.2b-3b/Legge, \textit{Li Chi} 1: 329.
masters establish [sacrifices] for three tutelary spirits: one for the ghosts of grand masters who do not have ancestors; one for the [spirit of the] outer gate; and one for the [spirit of the] lane. The official servicemen establish [sacrifices] for two tutelary spirits: one for the [spirit of the] outer gate and one for the [spirit of the] lane. The subofficial functionaries and the common people establish [a sacrifice] for either the [spirit of the] inner door or to the [spirit of the] stove.\textsuperscript{19}

The seven tutelary spirits seem to be national protective deities in as much as the five tutelary spirits seem to be household/local protective deities. The sacrifice to the outer gate is parallel to the sacrifice to the gates of the capital. However, at the lower levels of society, official servicemen, subofficial functionaries, and the common people, all offer sacrifices to either the outer gate or the inner door.

The *Bai hu tong* 白虎通, an account of the discussions on the classics and ceremonies held under Imperial order in 79 CE compiled by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), has an entire section devoted to the five tutelary spirits:

As for the five tutelary spirits, what do they refer to? They refer to the outer gate, the inner door, the well, the stove, and the impluvium.

Why are they offered sacrifices? Because they are the place where man dwells, that through which he exits and enters, and the place where he eats and drinks. For this reason, they have been made spirits and offered sacrifices.

\textsuperscript{19} *Liji* 46.16b-17a/Legge, *Li Chi* 2: 206-207.
How do we know that the five tutelary spirits are referred to as the outer gate, the inner door, the well, the stove, and the impluvium? The *Yue ling* says [in the spring] one worships the inner door; [in the summer] one worships the stove; [in the middle of the year] one worships the impluvium; [in the autumn] one worships the outer gate; and [in the winter] one worships the well.

Why is it that only grand masters or higher are able to offers sacrifices to them? A serviceman's rank is low and his pay is meager, so he only offers sacrifices to his early ancestors. The *Li ji* says the Son of Heaven offers sacrifices to heaven and earth, the feudal lords offer sacrifices to the mountains and streams, the grand masters offers sacrifices to the five tutelary spirits, and the servicemen offer sacrifices to their ancestors. The *Qu li* [chapter of the *Liji*] says [the Son of Heaven] offers sacrifices to heaven and earth, the four seasons, the mountains and rivers, and the five tutelary spirits throughout the course of a year. The feudal lords offer sacrifices within their own territories to the mountains and rivers and the five tutelary spirits throughout the course of a year. The grand masters offer sacrifices to the five tutelary spirits. The servicemen offer sacrifices to their ancestors. A sacrifice which is not appropriate to offer yet is offered is called an ‘excessive sacrifice’ (*yin si* 淫祀). An excessive sacrifice does not bring good fortune.
Why are the five tutelary spirits sacrificed to throughout the course of a year? They are in accordance with the five phases (wu xing 五行).

Therefore, in the spring sacrifices are offered to the inner door. The inner door is that through which man exits and enters. Also, spring is when the myriad creatures butt against the inner door in order to escape. In the summer, sacrifices are offered to the stove. [The stove] is the master of fire. It is that by which [man prepares food] to nourish himself. Also, during the summer, fire is king, growing and nourishing the myriad creatures. In autumn, sacrifices are offered to the outer gate. When the outer gate is closed one is concealed and secure. Also, in autumn, the myriad creatures reach maturity while protecting themselves within [the earth]. In the winter one offers sacrifices to the well. The well is that from which water hidden in the earth comes from. Also, during winter water is king hiding and concealing the myriad creatures. In the sixth month sacrifices are offered to the impluvium. The impluvium resembles [a mound] of earth in the center [of the house]. Also, during the sixth month, earth is king. For these reasons, the Yue ling says that in spring one worships the inner door and offers the spleen first. In summer it says one worships the stove offering the lungs first. In autumn it says one worships the outer gate offering the liver first. In the winter it says one worships the well and

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20I have taken the translation 'excessive sacrifice' from William H. Nienhauser, Jr., "Han Yu, Liu Tsung-yuan and Boundaries of Literati Piety," Journal of Chinese Religions 19 (1991): 76. This passage explains which class of people can offer sacrifice to which deities. A sacrifice which is offered to a deity which one is not allowed to worship is called an 'excessive sacrifice' and brings no benefit. Mu-chou Poo defines the term as 'excessive cult'. He contends that an 'excessive cult' could be any cult not mentioned in the Liji as being an officially sponsored cult or a cult which is considered to be immoral or abusive (185-187).
offers the kidneys first. In the middle [of the year] it says one worships the
impluvium offering the heart first.

In the spring, when worshipping the inner door, why at that time is the
spleen offered first? The spleen corresponds to earth. In the spring wood
is dominant bringing an end to earth. Therefore, the spleen is that which
[having been conquered] is offered as a sacrifice.

The kidneys [are offered] in winter and the heart in the middle [of the
year], yet, why are they offered as sacrifices when they are not [of the
element] that has been conquered? The earth occupies the center position
and is the most honored [element]. For this reason one offers the heart as a
sacrifice. The heart is the most honored of the viscera. Water occupies the
lowest [position] and is not able ‘to eat’ those that it conquers.

When offering sacrifices to the five tutelary spirits, the Son of Heaven and
the feudal lords use an ox. The grand masters use a goat. The type of
livestock [sacrificed] is based according to the four seasons. Another
opinion says a goat [is sacrificed to] the inner door, a pheasant [is sacrificed
to] the stove, a suckling pig [is sacrificed to] the impluvium, a dog [is
sacrificed to] the outer gate, and a hog [is sacrificed to] the well. Some say
an ox is used for the impluvium and if [an ox] is not available, a suckling
pig is used. A fish is used for the well.21

21I have based my translation in part on Tjan 2: 376-378.
As can be seen, much of what is discussed is based on quotes from the *Liji* itself with few new details added. It also seems to be an attempt by Han scholars to correlate the five tutelary household deities with the five phases. The only reason stated in this passage as to why the inner door and the outer gate are represented as spirits is that they are that through which man enters and exits.

Based on the excerpts from the *Liji* and the commentary by Zheng Xuan, by at least the beginning of the first century CE, there already existed a ritual for offering sacrifices to a set of five tutelary spirits of the household. However, there is little information as to the reason these specific locations within the house were sacrificed to, how these locations became ‘deified’, or their evolution as spirits. However, it is evident that the inner door and outer gate along with the other tutelary spirits were, at the time, considered spirits and offered sacrifices.

One cannot read modern studies of door gods without finding some reference to the five tutelary deities. Some scholars have inferred that the spirit of the inner door and the outer gate were the precursor to the eventual development of door gods and some scholars imply or even presume that the modern day door gods evolved directly from the five tutelary deities. The Chinese popular religious pantheon does include deities representative of each of the five tutelary deities. Paired door gods are representative of the inner door and the outer gate. Rituals associated with the stove god exist in China to this very day and the stove god is often depicted with his wife and attendants or with the other household deities. The spirit of the impluvium is considered by some scholars to be the ancestor of the household god of the locality (*tu di shen* 土地神). There is also evidence supporting the appearance of a god of the well

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22 Ma Shutian, *Hua xia zhu shen*, (Beijing: Beijing yan chu ban she, 1990) 354-355; Bo 49.
and god of the lane. Although it is logical to assume that today’s door gods evolved from the spirit of the inner door and the outer gate there is no direct evidence to support this hypothesis. On the contrary, sacrifices to the five tutelary spirits continued in conjunction with the posting of door god depictions on gates during the New Year celebration.

There is also evidence supporting the continued worship of the five and/or seven tutelary spirits. Even with the introduction of paired sets of protective door deities, the sacrifices continued. Modern-day door gods may have branched off from the five/seven tutelary deities but the evidence proves that the door gods did not supplant the five/seven tutelary spirits. Evidence supporting the actual practice of sacrificing to the gate and the door can be found in the Han shu 漢書: "In the third month [of the second year (103 BCE) of the Taichu 太初 reign period], the Imperial tour was in Hedong 河東. [The Emperor] sacrificed to the god of the soil. He commanded all the Underheaven to have a drinking celebration lasting five days, and [to conduct] a lu 腰 sacrifice, and to make offerings to the gate and the door. This is the La.”

2.2 Shen Tu and Yu Lei and Peachwood Charms

The earliest reference to a paired set of protective door deities is found in Wang

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23 Han shu 6.200. The commentary to this section states: Ru Chun 如淳 [Three Kingdoms/Wei] says, “Lu 腰 sounds like lou 樓. [According to the] Han yi zhu 漢儀注, the first day of autumn is the chulu 豬腰.” Fu Yan [Later Han] 伏巖 says, “Lu 腰 sounds like liu 劉. Liu 劉 means sha 殺, ‘to kill’. “ Su Lin [Three Kingdoms/Wei] 蘇林 says, “Lu 腰 is the name of a sacrifice. A chu 豬 is a kind of tiger. Occasionally, on the first day of autumn they will sacrifice that which is the king of beasts. For this reason, at sunrise, they hunt, and when they return, they sacrifice in the ancestral temple. Hence, they have a chulu 豬腰 sacrifice.” [Yan] Shigu 顏師古 (581-645) says, “It is written chuliu 豬劉 in the Xu Han shu 漢書. As for lu 腰 and liu 劉, their meanings are the same.” The dictionary Erya 宋玉 defines the chu as being similar to a raccoon dog (li 豹). Guo Pu’s 郭璞 (276-324) commentary to this definition states that, “Nowadays, a chu is a tiger (hu 虎). It is big as a dog (gou 狗) and has markings like a fox (li),” (Cihai 2222).

24 Han shu 6.200.
Chong’s (27-ca. 100) Lun heng, where he attributes the legend to a lost passage from the Shan hai jing (ca. 3rd century BCE):

The Shan hai jing states: In the mist of the Eastern Sea (Dong hai 東海) there is Dushuo Mountain upon which is a giant peachwood tree whose branches twist and coil [over an area of] three thousand li 里. To the northeast, there is a space between its branches called the Gate of Ghosts through which a myriad ghosts pass in and out. Above [the gate] there are two spirits, one called Shen Tu, one called Yu Lei who preside over and examine the myriad ghosts. They seize the evil and harmful ghosts using reed ropes and then feed them to tigers. Thus, the Yellow Thearch (Huang Di) then made a ritual for the seasonal exorcism in which large peachwood figurines (tao ren 桃人) are set up, [images of] Shen Tu and Yu Lei as well as [images of] tigers are painted on the doors and gates, and reed ropes are hung up, [all] to guard against [the evil ghosts].

A near identical version of the above tale is found in another section of the Lun heng with only the additional information that Shen Tu and Yu Lei are brothers. This second section does give the following information as to the actual rituals being performed in first century China:

Today [i.e. first century CE], the district magistrates carve peachwood into human figures and place them on the sides of the door and paint images of tigers on the gates and door-curtains. Well now, the peachwood figurines are not [the actual Shen] Tu and Yu Lei and the painted tigers are not the

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25Lun heng 65/7/1498. This passage does not occur in the extant Shan hai jing.
actual tigers that eat ghosts, [but] the carvings and painting are imitations of the [actual] image with the hope that they will ward off evil.\(^\text{26}\)

The above legend incorporates a number of exorcistic devices which seem to have been in use during pre-Han times. The recent discovery of a forty-five bamboo-slip manuscript entitled *Jie* 詛 (*Spellbinding*) sheds new light on the use of peachwood in the fight against malevolent forces. The text was discovered in 1975-1976, during the excavation of Tomb 11, at Shuihudi 睡虎地, Hubei Province. The tomb has been dated ca. 217 BCE. The text contains seventy entries which describe various demons and "demonic" forces and the exorcistic methods for dispelling their effects.\(^\text{27}\) The use of peachwood is described in four of the entries.\(^\text{28}\) Two entries refer to striking a demon with reeds.\(^\text{29}\) This practice could have been a precursor to the practice of hanging reed ropes above doors in imitation of the ones used by Shen Tu and Yu Lei.

Of most importance, are two references to peachwood figurines. The first is entry number 37 which states, "When a person is anxious without cause. Make a peachwood figurine and rub it. On a gui 癸 (the tenth Celestial Stem) day at sunset, throw it into the road and quickly say, 'So-and-so will avoid anxiety'."\(^\text{30}\) The second reference is entry number 47 which states, "When a large goblin continually enters a person's home and cannot be stopped, strike it with a peachwood figurine. Then it will stop."\(^\text{31}\) Even though none of the aforementioned exorcistic practices involve placing peachwood or

\(^{26}\)*Lun heng* 47/12/1445. This passage is not attributed to the *Shan hai jing*.


\(^{28}\) Harper, "*Spellbinding*," entry 2.244 (peachwood bow); entry 5.244-245 (a hammer with a peachwood handle); entry 11.245 (peachwood staff); and entry 46.248 (peachwood stakes).

\(^{29}\) Harper, "*Spellbinding*," entry 57.249 and 58.249.

\(^{30}\) Harper, "*Spellbinding*," entry 37.248.

\(^{31}\) Harper, "*Spellbinding*," entry 47.248.
the figurines at the door, the entries do establish the use and effectiveness of peachwood and of peachwood figurines and entry 47 does stress the use of peachwood in barring entrance into one’s home.

Peachwood figurines are also mentioned in a passage from the *Zhan guo ce* 戰國策 (early 3rd century BCE). The following passage is a record of a conversation between Su Qin 蘇秦 and the Lord of Meng-chang 孟常 of the state of Qin 秦:

> When I was coming here today, I crossed the Zi 河 River. There, [I saw] a clay figurine talking with a peachwood figurine. The peachwood figurine said to the clay figurine, “You, sir, are from the soil of the western bank. You have been molded into human form. During the eighth month, when the rains come and the waters of the Zi River rise, then you will be destroyed.” The clay figurine replied, “That is not so. Since I am made of soil from the western bank, I will merely return to the western bank. You, sir, are a peachwood figurine from the eastern country, carved into the shape of a human. When the rains come and the waters of the Zi River rise, you will float away. Then, drifting and tossed about, what will become of you?”

The legend of Shen Tu and Yu Lei seems to have been widely known during the

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32 Bodde, *Festivals* 131, suspects that the clay figurine represents an earthenware figure which was traditionally buried in tombs. In the previously mentioned text, *jie*, there is an interesting entry, number 3, which states, “When without cause a demon lodges in a person’s home—this is the Demon of Abandoned Places. Take earth from an old abandoned place, and make imitation people and dogs with it. Set them on the outside wall, one person and one dog every five paces, and encircle the home. When the demon comes, scatter ashes, strike a winnowing basket, and screech at it. Then it stops.” Harper, “Spellbinding”, 244. First, this is, to my knowledge, the earliest reference to any human figurine being placed in front of/around one’s home as a protective measure against a malevolent force. Second, based on sheer speculation, I propose that the discussion is between a peachwood figurine and one of these earthen-figurines, possibly being a discussion as to whom is the better protector, considering the effect weathering has on each.

33 *Zhan guo ce* 4.32b-33a.
first and second centuries. A detailed account of the Nuo 雛 exorcism, as performed during the Latter Han (25-220), is found in the Hou Han shu 後漢書 and briefly mentions the role played by peachwood and Yu Lei: “On the day before the La month is the Great Nuo [Exorcism], referred to as expelling pestilence ... All the government officials put on wooden animal masks and follow behind the preceptors of the Nuo. At the end of the ceremony, they set up peachwood boards, [depictions of Shen Tu] and Yu Lei, and rush cords. [The procession] stops when they reach the steps of the palace. Reed lances and peachwood staves are presented to the Dukes, Chamberlains, Generals, the outstanding Marquis, and the various Commandants.”

Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139) wrote in his Dong jing fu 東京賦, a descriptive account of the city of Luoyang 洛陽, about the role played by Shen Tu and Yu Lei in the yearly Nuo exorcism stating, “... their eyes peer into cracks and crevices; they are charged with seizing any lingering spirits. The houses of the capital are quiet and pure; no more impropitious influences remain.”

The legend of Shen Tu and Yu Lei seems to have been widely known, having also been quoted in Feng su tong yi 風俗通義 by Ying Shao 應劭 (ca. 140-ca. 206), Han jiu yi (bu yi) 漢書儀 (補遺) by Wei Hong 衛宏 (Eastern Han Dynasty) and Gao You’s 高誘 (fl. 205-212) commentary to the Zhan guo ce. However, Cai Yong’s (133-192) Du Duan provides us with the earliest reference to this custom being associated with the festivities celebrating the end of the lunar year:

During the twelfth lunar month, when the year has come to an end, usually, the night before the La festival is for banishing and expelling [evil

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34 Hou Han shu 5.3127-3128;
36 Feng su tong yi jiao yu 8.367-368; Han jiu yi (bu yi) B.8b; Zhan guo ce 4.32a.
influences]. For this, images of [Shen] Tu and [Yu] Lei are painted on doors and gates and reed ropes are hung above the doors and gates in order to protect against evil influences.\textsuperscript{37}

By the first century CE, as Bodde has pointed out, two customs regarding protective door deities were already common. One was the placement of carved peachwood figurines of Shen Tu and Yu Lei on the sides of doorways, possibly limited to only public buildings and official residences as suggested by Bodde. The second was the custom of painting the images of the two on doors and gates.\textsuperscript{38} Also, sometime during the mid to late first century CE at the latest, these customs were already part of the New Year festival. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, this custom continued. With the invention of printing and the mass-production of woodblock prints the painting of protective door deities on the physical door was replaced by what is now called pasting up of woodblock-printed New Year prints. In addition, during the Ming dynasty, Shen Tu and Yu Lei were joined by a number of historical figures popularized and deified through legend and dramas.

2.3 Cheng Qing: An Early Door Guardian?

In the \textit{Han shu} 漢書, compiled by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), there is a brief passage which describes a figure painted on the palace gates:

The palace gates of [Prince Hui 惠 of Guangchuan 廣川 were decorated] with paintings of Cheng Qing 成慶 wearing a short overcoat, large trousers, and a long sword. Commentary: Jin Zhuo 晉灼 [Jin Dynasty]

\textsuperscript{37}Du Duan A.11.
\textsuperscript{38}Bodde, \textit{Festivals} 136-137.
says: Cheng Qing is Jing Ke [?-227 BCE], the people of Wei refer to [Jing Ke] as Qing Qing, the people of Yan refer to [Jing Ke] as Jing Qing. Yan Shigu 顏師古 [581-645] says: Cheng Qing was a brave elite-soldier of ancient times. An account of him is in the *Huai nan zi*. He is not Jing Qing.

There are no paintings or records of paintings which claim to depict Jing Ke. There are also no literary or artistic references, from any time period, to his image being used as a door god. Other than the above passages, very little else is known about the use of his portrait.

2.4 A Note on the Protective Power of the Tiger

The legend of Shen Tu and Yu Lei stated that the evil spirits were fed to tigers and that the people painted the image of the tiger on their doors and gates. The *Shuo wen jie zi* dictionary, compiled by Xu Shen 許慎 (30-124) defined the tiger as king of the beasts. Ying Shao in his *Feng su tong yi* describes the tiger as “... a creature of yang. It is the leader of the hundred quadrupeds. It is capable of seizing and striking with aggression, biting and devouring ghosts and spirits.” Almost six hundred years later, the practice was still flourishing. Duan Chengshi 段成式 (803-863) noted that “It is customary to paint tiger heads on the gates.” The image of the tiger remained a common theme in door god prints. Yuan Jiong 袁櫵 (Song) notes, “Before the Jingkang

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39 Jing Ke was a native of Wei during the Warring States Period who was asked by the prince of Yan to assassinate Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 but failed.  
40 *Han shu* 53.2428.  
42 *Feng su tong yi* 8.368.  
43 *Yu yang za zu (xu)* 4.133a.
靖康 reign period (1126-1127), the door gods of families and households of Henan came in many varieties and styles and wore tiger-headed helmets.\textsuperscript{44} There are Qing dynasty examples of door gods riding tigers or wearing tiger-headed belts or helmets.\textsuperscript{45} The tiger has retained its protective powers into the present day. There are several examples of modern-day woodblock prints depicting the tiger in a protective role.\textsuperscript{46}

2.5 A Note on the Protective Power of the Cock

In addition to the tiger, the cock is also a symbol possessing protective or exorcistic abilities. Images of the cock were painted on doors and windows or a statue of a cock was placed on door lintels or window sills to ward off malevolent forces.\textsuperscript{47} The earliest reference to this practice was recorded by Wang Jia 王嘉 (?-385). Based on the following tale, it seems Wang Jia is implying that the custom in his time of painting the cock's image is derived from the legend of the mythological chongming 重明 bird.

After Yao 堯 had reigned for seventy years, luan 鶉 fledglings would arrive and flock together year after year, the qilin 麒麟 would saunter about the shallow lakes, and the [evil omen] xiao-梟 owl had flown away to the remote deserts. [During this time] the region of Qizhi 祇支 presented [Yao] with a chongming bird. It was called 'shuang-jing' 雙睛 -- "double-pupil" --

\textsuperscript{44} Feng chuang xiao du B.26.
\textsuperscript{45} A modern print from a Qing dynasty woodblock depicts the door gods Shen Tu and Yu Lei wearing tiger-skin clothing is in Po 111.
\textsuperscript{46} For examples of images of tigers in modern New Year prints see Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu 1:170,382, 391, 410, 2:621; Wang Shucun, Paper Joss 147; Rudova 24. See Po 108-109 for a paired set of tigers for pasting on a double-leaved door. The inscription on the left tiger print says "Divine Tigers Protect the Home" and the inscription on the right tiger print says "Preserve the Good and Expel the Evil".
because each of its eyes had two pupils. It looked somewhat like a chicken
and crowed like a phoenix. Even when they molted, they could still use
their [feather-less] wings to fly. They were capable of seizing or driving off
wild beasts, tigers, and wolves, thus preventing monsters, calamities, and
all manner of evil from doing any harm. They fed on the gao 稻 grain from
the qiong 瓠 [tree]. Sometimes several came during the year, sometimes,
for several years, none would come. As for the people, there is not a single
person who does not sweep and wash [the areas in front of their] gates and
doors in the hope that the chongming birds will gather there. During the
times that they do not come, the people will carve wood or cast metal in
their image. [They believe] that if they place these in front of their doors
and gates, then the chi 雌 demon and the mei 魅 goblin, and all types of vile
[creatures] will recoil and hide. Nowadays, every New Year’s Day, the
people carve cocks out of wood or cast them in metal. Sometimes they
paint their image above their windows. The image [of the cock] is a vestige
[of the chongming bird].

An alternate suggestion as to why the cock serves as an exorcistic symbol is
attributed to the Jin dynasty text Xuan zhong ji 玄中記, by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324), which
incorporates the cock into a variant of the original myth of Shen Tu and Yu Lei:

In the southeast there is Taodu 桐都 Mountain upon which there is a
large tree which is called ‘peach-capital’ (taodu). Its branches cover an area
of three thousand li. In [the tree's branches] there is a celestial cock. When
the sun rises and shines upon the tree, the celestial cock crows. All the

\(^{48} Shi yì jì 1.24. \)
cocks [in the world] follow in suit crowing. Beneath this tree there are two
gods. The left one is called Long 隆 and the right one is called You 有.
They both have reed ropes with which to seize the unpropitious spirits
which they come across. Having seized them, they bind them [with the
reed ropes]. Nowadays, people on New Year’s day make two peachwood
figures and place them on the sides of the gate. They take cock feathers
and stick them in between the [reed] rope [and the peachwood figures].
[The feathers] are affixed instead of the actual [cock] corpse.⁴⁹

This practice continued, as can be seen from a passage in the section on rites in the *Jin
shu* 晉書: “On the first day of the new year, they often display reed ropes and
peachwood branches, [or] a dismembered cock is placed on the gates of the palace and
the hundred temples, all in order to exorcise the evil vapors.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹*Xuan zhong ji* 375.
⁵⁰*Jin shu* 19.600.
CHAPTER III  Door Guardians during the Sixth through Tenth Centuries

3.1 Zhong Kui

To date, there have been numerous studies on the Zhong Kui theme in literature and art.\(^{51}\) As stated in my introduction, I have classified Zhong Kui as an exorcistic door guardian. Perhaps, it is best to describe Zhong Kui as an exorcistic deity or guardian. Since we can find paired sets of Zhong Kui prints which are used as door gods, he is worth mentioning because he does share similarities with door gods. First, both door god prints and prints of Zhong Kui are pasted up in order to expel evil ghosts. Second, both were associated with end of the year celebrations. Door god prints were hung on either New Year’s Eve or New Year’s Day while Zhong Kui prints were often given as gifts at this time.\(^{52}\)

The origin of the legend of Zhong Kui, the Demon Queller, is attributed to the Tang dynasty. The legend can be found in the sixteenth century *Tian zhong ji* 天中記 by Chen Yaowen 陳耀文 who quotes from a now lost Song dynasty text *Tang yi shi* 唐逸史:

One afternoon in the Kaiyuan era [713-742], Minghuang 明皇 [the emperor Xuanzong 玄宗, r. 712-756], feeling ill after he had returned from a round of bow-and-arrow practice on Li Shan 騰山, fell asleep. He soon saw in a dream a small-sized demon, wearing only knee-length trousers and one shoe -- the


\(^{52}\) Fong, “‘A Probable Second ‘Chung K’uei’” 428; *Echo of Things Chinese* 15.
other being tied at his waist -- and holding a bamboo fan, in the act of stealing his favorite consort's embroidered perfume-bag and his own jade flute. Then, instead of escaping, the strange being began frolicking around the palace grounds with the loot. Minghuang therefore approached him and demanded an explanation. The demon respectfully replied that his name was Xu Hao and explained “Xu” stood for “stealing indiscriminately for the sake of fun” and “Hao” for “replacing man's joys with sorrows”. Hearing this, the emperor became angry and wanted to call for his bodyguards. But at that very moment, a large-sized demon, wearing a tattered hat, blue robe, horn waist-belt, and black boots appeared and nabbed the thief. Immediately afterwards, he proceeded first to gouge out the victim's eyes, then tore him to pieces and finally ate him. When the emperor asked him who he was, the Demon Queller introduced himself as Zhong Kui, a jinshi from Zhongnan, who, ashamed at having failed the next higher degree of examination during the Wude era [618-626], had committed suicide by dashing his head against the palace steps. He further mentioned that because the emperor Gaozu awarded him an honorable burial befitting a court official of the green-robe rank, he had vowed to rid the world of mischievous demons like Xu Hao. At these words, Minghuang awoke and found himself fully recovered. Without delay he summoned Wu Daozi and requested him to paint a portrait of the Demon Queller according to his dream. When it was finished, the emperor examined it carefully and said, “You and I must have had a similar vision!” And he awarded Wu one hundred taels of gold.53

53 Fong, "A Probable Second 'Chung K'uei'" 427-428 with minor changes.
A less embellished, but similar, account is recorded by Shen Gua in his *Meng xi bi tan* 夢溪筆談. A number of Ming dynasty scholars such as Lang Ying 郎瑛 [1487-1566], Yang Shen 楊慎 [1488-1559], and Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 [1613-1682] argued that the term *zhong kui* was already associated with expelling evil prior to the recording of the formalized legend of Zhong Kui in the Song dynasty. These scholars, quoting from a number of pre-Tang sources note that the personal name Zhong Kui derived from the homophone *zhong kui* 終葵, a mallet-type weapon used for combatting evil ghosts. By the Tang dynasty however the custom of the Emperor presenting images of Zhong Kui as New Year gifts was well established and textual sources note that this continued throughout the Five Dynasties era. Song dynasty textual sources (quoted later in this thesis) also contain numerous references to the sale of Zhong Kui prints to the general public. Although Zhong Kui acts alone, he still has become associated with the door gods, and there are identical mirror images of Zhong Kui which are intended to be pasted on double leaved doors to act in the same manner as a door god print.

### 3.2 The Door Guardians of Medieval China

The *Jing-chu sui shi ji* 荊楚歲時記 by Zong Lin 宗懔 (c. 500-565) is a description of seasonal customs in sixth-century Jing-chu -- the area of present-day Hunan, Hubei, and Sichuan. In this text, Zong notes, "[On the first day of the first lunar month]... they make peachwood boards and place them on the inner door. They refer to [peachwood]...

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56 *Dong jing meng hua lu* 10.61; *Xu hu lao ren fan sheng lu* 124; *Meng liang lu* 6.181; *Wu lin jiu shi* 3.384; *Can chu sui shi ji* 23b.
57 An example of a paired image of Zhong Kui can be found in Po 142-143.
as wood of the immortals \( [\text{xian mu 仙木}] \) \(^{58}\) . . . [They] engrave or paint a cock on the door; suspend reed ropes above it; and, insert peachwood charms on the sides [of the door]. The hundred ghosts fear these."\(^{59}\) Du Gongzhan's 杜公瞻 (Sui Dynasty) commentary adds, "According to Court Gentleman for Consultation Dong Xun 董勛 of the Wei dynasty, nowadays on the first day of the \( La \), they make smoky fires in front of the gate. Peachwood gods, twisted cords, pine and cypress, and slaughtered cocks are placed on the gates and doors as a ritual for expelling pestilence."\(^{60}\) Zong also notes, "On the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, [people] prepare bean congee. They top it with an oily paste and offer it to the [spirits] of the outer gate and inner door. First, they take a poplar branch and suspend it over the gate. After the poplar branch has been suspended they immediately partake of wine and seasoned meat. Later, they stick chopsticks in the bean congee and offer it [to the spirits of the outer gate and the inner door]."\(^{61}\) During the Wei dynasty the poplar branch seems to have become another protective device associated with the door. According to the \( Qi \) \( min \) \( yao \) \( shu \) 齊民要術 by Jia Sixie 畲思勰 of the Eastern Wei dynasty (534-550), "On the first day of the first lunar month, they take branches of poplar or willow and suspend them over the door so that the hundred ghosts will not enter the home."\(^{62}\)

As noted in the \( Jing-chu \) \( sui \) \( shi \) \( ji \), the custom of placing door gods, peachwood boards, and rush cords, based on the custom established during the Han in emulation of the legend of Shen Tu and Yu Lei, continued through the Wei dynasty and into the Tang dynasty. As Zong Lin notes, the act of placing peachwood gods on the sides of

\(^{58}\) \( Jing-chu \) \( sui \) \( shi \) \( ji \) 1a.

\(^{59}\) \( Jing-chu \) \( sui \) \( shi \) \( ji \) 2a.

\(^{60}\) \( Jing-chu \) \( sui \) \( shi \) \( ji \) 2a. The source of this quote is from Dong Xun’s \( Wen \) \( li \) \( su \), 1.1a (vol. 2, p. 1080).

\(^{61}\) \( Jing-chu \) \( sui \) \( shi \) \( ji \) 4a.

\(^{62}\) \( Qi \) \( min \) \( yao \) \( shu \) 5.253.
the door coexisted with the custom of offering sacrifices to the spirits of the outer gate and the inner door. Based on this observation, we can be certain that the spirit of the inner door and outer gate were not supplanted by the peachwood gods at least as late as the sixth century. Instead, they coexisted. Thus one can argue that perhaps the door god evolved from or branched off from the early five tutelary spirits.

The following tale, from Zhang Du’s 張讀 (834-?) Xuan shi zhi 宣室志, “General Willow” (Liu jiang jun 柳將軍) includes a unique twist which is not found in other tales of door gods. The protagonist of the tale, a spectre by the name of General Willow, claims that the gods of the gate and the door are his slaves. This is the only reference to a pair of door guardians having been ‘captured’.

“General Willow”

[On the banks of the] Eastern Luo 洛 River there was an old house. In the southwest corner of the main hall there was a wide flight of stairs which led up to a grand balcony. However, many of the people who had lived here died violent deaths. Therefore, the house stood vacant and boarded up for a long time.

For this reason, Right Policy Advisor Lu Qian 盧虔 of Fangyang 范陽, during the Zhenyuan 貞元 (785-805) reign period, was appointed Censor and detached to the Investigation Section of the Chancellery. He had previously desired to purchase the house but was unsuccessful in doing so. Some said, “There is a spectre in the house. You cannot live in that place!”

To which he replied, “I personally am capable of eliminating it.”

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63 Xuan shi zhi 5.58-60.
64 The Eastern Luo River is located in Jianshi 建始 County, Hubei Province.
One night later, Lu together with a subordinate slept in the main hall. He ordered all the rest of his retainers to remain beyond the gate. His subordinate, an expert archer, was brave and fierce. Thus, he took his bow and arrows and sat at the foot of the balcony.

Late into the night, they heard a knocking at the door. The subordinate immediately asked who was there. “General Willow dispatched me to deliver this writ to Censor Lu,” came the response. Lu did not reply. Then the writ was tossed to the foot of the balcony. The characters looked like they had just been written with a fresh brush and the strokes were neat and orderly. Qian ordered the subordinate to read it. The characters read: “My family has lived in this place for several years! The southwest corner of the main hall and the balcony are both my home. The god of the gate and the spirit of the door are my slaves. You sir have broken into my home. What possibly could be the reasoning behind this!? Suppose this was your house sir, what would you do if I entered? Since you are not sufficiently afraid of me, could there be no shame in your heart? You sir, depart immediately. If you do not, you will invite the disgrace of defeat and ruin upon yourself.” After he had finished reading, the writ floated gracefully into mid-air and then scattered in every direction, as if it were ashes flying through the air.

After a moment, they heard someone speaking: “General Willow desires to meet with Censor Lu.” Then a huge spectre appeared. It was several tens of fathoms tall. It stood in the hall holding a ladle in its hand. The
subordinate immediately drew his bow all the way back and fired, hitting [the ladle which the spectre] held. The spectre fled abandoning the ladle. After a long time, it came back. It came down from the balcony and stood there, lowering its head and peering at them. Its features were very strange. The subordinate shot another [arrow], striking [the spectre's] chest. The spectre was startled, and, as if full of fear, fled toward the east and vanished.

When dawn arrived, Qian ordered the footprints tracked. They led to an uncultivated piece of land east of the house. There was a willow tree over thirty-three meters tall. There was an arrow piercing its [trunk]. It surely was what was known as General Willow. Qian cut it up into firewood.

Henceforth, those who dwelt in the house suffered no ills. After more than a year, when they were doing major construction on the rooms of the house, underneath the roof tiles they found a ladle. The bowl of the ladle was more than ten feet long and there was an arrow stuck in the handle. It was the very ladle that the General held.

An interesting dilemma involving terminology associated with the door gods arises in this tale. What I translated as “god of the gate and the spirit of the door” was originally written as “men shen hu ling 門神戶靈”. Assigning a deity to both the gate and the door strengthens the relationship between the pre-Han spirit of the inner door and outer gate and the modern-day door gods. I have found only one other reference to this term and it appears in a text from the same time period. It appears in a prose piece by Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) “Farewell to Poverty” (Song qiong wen 送窮文) which tells of a
ritual for expelling poverty performed by the author on January 30, 811. A passage in which the Demon of Poverty is speaking reads, "By the god of the gate and the spirit of the door I was reviled, I was scolded . . .". The same terminology used in the previous tale is used in this piece. To date, I have found no further references to the use of this term. As will be discussed later in the thesis, during the Song dynasty, a similar term will be used in reference to door guardians.

3.3 Tang Tales in the *Tai ping guang ji*

A perusal of the Song anthology *Tai ping guang ji* by Li Fang [925-996] yields several tales attributed to Tang dynasty texts which involve door gods. The story "Zhangsun Wuji" found in the *Tai ping guang ji* and attributed to the *Guang yi ji* by Dai Fu [jinshi 757] does yield some information regarding both the god of the gate and the effective use of peachwood in the battle against evil spirits. The story is important in that, for the first time, we see the god of the gate depicted in human-like form and in conjunction with the other household gods. Also, the fact that the outer gate, the well, and the stove are also mentioned as household gods lends credence to the hypothesis that the present-day household gods branched off and developed from the original five tutelary household spirits first discussed in the *Li ji*.

"Zhangsun Wuji"

Tang Taizong [r. 626--649] bestowed a beautiful lady on the Duke of

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66 Based on indexes to personal names in the *Tai ping guang ji*, I have been unable to locate any reference to Zhong Kui.

67 *Tai ping guang ji* 447.3657.
Zhao 趙, Zhangsun Wuji [ca. 600–659], who especially favored her.

Unexpectedly, she met a fox which enchanted her. The fox called itself Wang Ba 王八 and was over eight feet tall. It was constantly at the beautiful lady's side, and whenever the beautiful lady saw Wuji, she would grab a long knife and try to stab him. When Taizong heard about this matter he sent out an edict to scholars of the [magic] arts but, over and over again, none were able to drive away [the beautiful lady's affliction]. Afterwards, one of the sorcerers said that Adjutant Cui 崔 of Xiang 相 Prefecture\(^{68}\) was capable of curing this affliction. When Cui first took up office in the prefecture, he often told his subordinates that when an edict or writ arrived he should be summoned and that one should arrive within a few days. Several days later the imperial decree arrived and Cui then started on his journey.

Wang Ba wept sorrowfully. To the beautiful lady it said, “Adjutant Cui will be arriving soon. What am I going to do now? When he arrives at where I am staying, he will expose me and will immediately report everything.” Later, when Cui was just about to reach the capital, the fox fled. When Cui arrived, by imperial order, he went to Wuji’s home. At that time, Taizong also paid a visit to [Wuji’s] residence. Cui set up a small, narrow table, sat down, and wrote a charm. Taizong and Wuji were both behind him. In an instant, [the gods] of the well, the stove, the gate, and the privy of the house, [along with] the spirits of the twelve terrestrial

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\(^{68}\)The old administrative seat of Xiang Prefecture is located at the modern-day administrative seat of Anyang 安陽 County, Henan Province.
stems arrived -- several tens of spirits altogether. Some were tall and some were short. Their appearance was strange. When they all arrived in the courtyard, Cui shouted at them, saying, “All of you lords are worthy officials, and, as gods of the household, your positions and responsibilities are not insignificant. Why did you allow this seductive fox to enter this house?” Some gods came forward and said, “This is a celestial fox. Our strength is not capable of subduing it; it is not that we accepted a bribe.” Cui ordered them to seize the fox and take it away. A short while later, they returned. Each wore a sword and [a bow] and arrows. They said that they had just now finished fighting a desperate battle [with the fox] but because of their wounds, in the end, they were unable to seize the fox. When they finished speaking they dispersed and left. Cui then quickly wrote another charm. Heaven and earth became dark as night. The emperor and Wuji were afraid and went into the house. Suddenly, they heard the sounds of soldiers and horses coming from out of nowhere. In an instant, they saw five beings, each several tens of feet tall. They approached where Cui was, lined up, and paid their respects. Cui, thereupon, went down the steps and humbly dropped down to his knees. Then he called out to the emperor and Wuji to come out and pay obeisance. In the courtyard, all the gods just stood there watching. Cui said, “There is an enchanted fox in the honorable Minister’s home. I dare to trouble you to attend to this matter by removing [the fox].” All the gods respectfully pledged [to do this] and, one by one, they all departed. The
emperor asked what gods these were. Cui said they were the Gods of the Five Marchmounts. Then they again heard the sound of soldiers and horses. Thereupon, the fox, bound, was thrown down the stone steps. Wuji could not contain his rage. Consequently, he took up a long sword and struck the fox. At first, the fox was not frightened. Cui said, "This fox has the power of a god. There is nothing to be gained by attacking it. You will only tire yourself and nothing more." Then, he passed judgment on the fox, saying, "You indulge in licentious and selfish behavior without regard for others. [According to] the way of the gods, you [deserve] to be executed. I sentence you to five strikes." The fox begged for its life but Cui pulled a branch from the eastern side of a peachwood tree and flogged the fox. Although blood flowed over the ground, it [still] did not make Wuji happy. He only regretted that the fox was flogged so few times. Cui said, "Five strikes is equivalent to five hundred [blows] for a mortal. It really is no minor punishment."

A representative of the celestial officials was dispatched to them since killing the fox was not possible. The representative imperially decreed that from that time on the fox could never again enter the honorable Minister's house. Thereupon, the fox flew away, and the beautiful lady completely recovered from her illness.

This story is one of the first tales to actually portray the god of the door in a non-

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69 The Five Marchmounts represent the five sacred mountains of China -- Mount Tai (Taishan 泰山) in Shandong Province, Mount Heng (Hengshan 衡山) in Hunan Province, Mount Hua (Huashan 華山) in Shaanxi Province, Mount Heng (Hengshan 恒山) in Shanxi Province, and Mount Song (Songshan 嵩山) in Henan Province.
artistic role'. No reference is made to posting door prints or to the New Year festival. Here, the god of the door is depicted as a household deity. This god of the door can be ritually summoned and, despite the previous legends concerning their effectiveness at warding off ghosts, they are capable of being defeated by more powerful enemies -- in this case, the fox spirit. The above story also demonstrates the effectiveness of peachwood in subduing evil creatures. Although the fox spirit cannot be killed, the peachwood branch frightens the fox and does a considerable amount of harm to it.

The second story, which depicts Buddhist gate deities, from the Tai ping guang ji, is also attributed to the Guang yi ji:

“The Vajra of Wu Prefecture”

On the gates of the Kaiyuan 開元 Monastery in Wu 婺 Prefecture, there were two vajras. The world praised their divine power. Birds did not dare come near them. As for the sick and suffering, those who prayed [to the vajra], would always have [their prayers] fulfilled. [Many] would come and pay homage. During the Kaiyuan reign [713-742], the prefectural judicial supervisor hosted a banquet upstairs in a tower above the monastery gates. All of the guests said that it was not proper [to have the banquet here because] the vajra [are on the gate]. One person said, “Only the locals [believe this]. How would [the vajra] be capable of such feats?” Thereupon, he partook of some wine and meat. A moment later, the clouds above the tower darkened and then both wind and lightening [arose]. The wine and meat flew about and all the people were frightened.

\(^{70}\)Tai ping guang ji 100.670.

\(^{71}\)Located at the administrative seat of present-day Jinhua 金華 County, Zhejiang Province.
Those among them who had insulted the vajra were flung out of the tower several hundred feet and struck dead by lightening.

In this story the vajra act as gate guardians and it can be inferred that they are probably carved into the temple gates and play the role of temple guardians. Again, the notion that the door guardians are merely passive images protecting a building is dispelled. These guardians not only have the ability to heal those who believe in them but also possess considerable power to summon the wind and lightening. Portrayed with emotion, the guardians are easily insulted and do not hesitate in delivering just retribution.\(^2\)

The variety of door guardians for doors in Buddhist monasteries is extremely varied as evidenced from a passage in the *Gen ben shuo yi qie you bu pi nai ye song* (translated by Yi Jing, 635-713):

- On the leaves of the main gate are painted gods; their faces relaxed; joyful and smiling.
- Sometimes the images are of yakshas; holding staves to defend against evil.
- Painted are examples [of the Buddha's] great supernatural power and ability; or the Buddha emerging from within a flower.
- When they paint the wheel of life and death; it may even cover both leaves of the gate.
- On the door leaves of the incense halls are painted; yakshas or gods holding flowers.

In the large kitchen of the monks;
there are painted gods holding up exquisite food.
On the storeroom gates are images of yakshas;
holding in their hands ru-

yi 如意 scepters and sacks.
Sometimes they hold up a vase of celestial virtue;
pouring forth from it all types of wealth and treasure.\textsuperscript{73}

The third and final example is also attributed to the \textit{Guang yi ji}:

"Née Li"\textsuperscript{74}

During the Kaiyuan reign period (713-741) of the Tang dynasty there
was a girl of the Li 李 family. She was orphaned at a very early age and
went to live with her maternal uncle's family. When she was twelve there
came around a fox that desired to seduce her. Even though the fox did not
reveal his form, he spoke and made many proposals.

After a number of months, this [same] fox showed up again. The sound
of its voice was slightly different. The family members laughed, saying,
"This one is different from that unruly fox from the countryside!" The fox
also laughed and said, "How did you know that? The one that came
before was my fourteenth elder brother. I am his younger brother. A
while ago, I was planning to marry a daughter from the Wei 魏 family. I
had prepared [a roll] of red silk half an arm in length but my elder brother
inexplicably stole it and fled. This caused my wedding to be postponed.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Gen ben shuo yi qie you bu pin ai ye song} 24.1459.656b.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Tai ping guang ji} 449.3673-3674.
Therefore, I am constantly seeking revenge. For this reason, I have come here today.”

Née Li then politely deferred to him and asked him to conduct a ritual to ward off [the other fox]. The fox said [to the girl's family], “Tomorrow is the day of the auspicious stars for my fourteenth elder brother so he definitely will come by here and cause you great trouble. You should order the girl to cut off her ring finger at the first joint in order to ward him off.” When the fox finished talking, he left.

The elder fox arrived just when the girl was about to eat. The girl did as the younger fox instructed and cut off her finger joint. The fox took out six or seven pills of medicine that were about the size of Buddhist rosary beads. He threw them at the girl's rice bowl but, one after the other, they did not go into [the bowl]. [The fox] exclaimed in surprise at the improbability of this. In a loud voice he said, “All this time I have been on the peak of Songshan 嵩山 studying the Way and beginning to attain [enlightenment]! Among the disciples was an old woman who possessed this medicine. She was scared to go back and so she relinquished it to me.” Someone asked her for an explanation. She replied, “An unruly fox seduced me.” Swearing and cursing, [the elder fox] said, “What an old crone! How can there be people like that?”

After the fox had departed, the younger fox again returned and said, “What happened? Were my words true?” The family members all politely deferred to him. [The younger fox] said, “In another ten days or so, my
elder brother will definitely return. You ought to be wary of him. This fellow will have already spoken with the celestial officials and is knowledgeable of a spell that brings protection. You will be powerless against him. Only I am able to control him. Wait until he is about to arrive again, then I will return here."

Just as the elder fox was about to arrive, the younger fox returned a day earlier. He took some medicine wrapped like pine flowers, gave it to the girl, and said [to the family], “My elder brother will definitely arrive tomorrow. Tomorrow morning, hitch up a carriage, put the girl in it and drive northeast. If there are riders pursuing, then she should take this medicine and strew it behind the carriage. Then she can avoid his perverse intentions.”

Née Li waited until the next day. Following the fox's words, they drove the girl in the carriage five or six li. At that point they saw there were many armored cavalrymen riding after her. Just when they were about to overtake her, she strew the medicine [behind the carriage]. When her pursuers saw the medicine, they stopped and did not dare go forward. At sundown that day the young fox again arrived. Laughing, he said, “Am I powerful or what?! There is another method which will give you permanent protection, then I will no longer come back.”

Née Li repeatedly paid obeisance, emphatically begging [for his help]. The fox then ordered her to fetch a branch from a peachwood tree on the eastern side. Using red ink, he wrote on the board, in order: [the name of
the prefecture, [the name of the] district, [the name of the] township, [the name of the] village, [the name] Hu Chuo 胡错 and [the name] Hu Miao 胡邈. He took those talismans and secured them with nails to the outside of the main gate as well as to the interior gate. This would definitely and permanently ward off any type of monstrosity. After that, the fox never came back again.

This girl remained young and never married. After several years, she was not seen again.

Again, talismans, in the form of a peachwood board, are placed on the outer and inner gates to effectively ward off another fox spirit. Interestingly, a pair of names were also written on the peachwood charms – Hu Chuo and Hu Miao. I have been unable to identify the two names in a number of biographical dictionaries. In Glen Dudbridge’s synopsis of this tale he states that they are unidentifiable names. Is it possible that these two represent a lost pair of guardian figures?

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75 Alvin P. Cohen believes that there is only one fox. In paragraph 2, line 1 of the translation (on p. 44), the phrase “this [same] fox” is used to refer to the young fox. He also notes that the elder and younger fox never appear together. It appears that the fox tricked the girl and her family, and, in the end took the girl away. Personal communication March 2, 1998.

CHAPTER IV The Development of Door Gods During the Song Dynasty

Song dynasty textual sources provide some of the best descriptions of the evolving role of door gods in the New Year’s celebration. Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1207) in his Wu jun zhi 吳郡志, a description of Wu 吳 Prefecture (modern Jiangsu Province), noted that door gods and peachwood charms were replaced on New Year’s Eve.\(^{77}\) In the Dong jing meng hua lu (preface dated 1147) by Meng Yuanlao, he describes everyday life in the Northern Song capital of Bianliang 汴梁 (modern Kaifeng 開封) during the years 1102-1125. Under the section describing the activities of the twelfth lunar month, Meng writes, “As the New Year festival approaches, all the printers in the marketplace sell door gods, [prints of] Zhong Kui, peachwood boards, and peachwood charms . . .”.\(^{78}\) Detailing the yearly Nuo exorcism which was performed on New Year’s Eve, Meng mentions that door gods did play an important part in the exorcistic procession — “They use two palace-guardian generals, in full armor, dressed as door gods.”\(^{79}\) A similar quote, “On New Year’s Eve they use two palace-guardian generals, in full armor, dressed as door gods,” has been attributed to Zhao Yushi’s 趙與時 (1175-1231) Bin tui lu 賓退錄 by a number of Qing dynasty texts.\(^{80}\) This has been included in several modern studies of door gods but I have been unable to find this quote in several versions of the Bin tui lu.\(^{81}\)

Three other texts describe everyday life in the Southern Song capital of Lin’an 臨安 (present-day Hangzhou 杭州). The Xihu laoren fansheng lu 西湖老人繁勝錄 by Hsihu

\(^{77}\) Wu jun zhi 2.10.
\(^{78}\) Dong jing meng hua lu 10.61.
\(^{79}\) Dong jing meng hua lu 10.62.
\(^{80}\) Ji shuo quan zhen 588; Zhu ding yu wen 391; Qing jia lu 104; Tu feng lu 1.16a.
\(^{81}\) Bo 49; Zhao Xinggen, Zhongguo bai shen quan shu (Hainan: Nan hai chu ban she, 1993) 238; Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu 1: 52.
laoren 西湖老人, a pseudonym, was written around 1253. In a description of the various urban precincts of the city, it notes that there were merchants who "... sold door god [prints] as tall as a person, gold lacquered peachwood charms and boards, Zhong Kui [prints], and 'treasure gate' [prints]." The Meng liang lu (preface dated ca. 1275) by Wu Zimu describes Lin'an during the years 1241-1274. It notes, "As New Year's Day approaches, a hundred goods appear on mats and in the shops. They paint door gods, peachwood charms, and 'welcoming spring' signboards. The 'paper-horse' shops print [images of] Zhong Kui, 'treasure-horse', 'turning-head horse', and others, which they present as gifts to their major customers." On New Year's Eve the people of Lin'an "... replace the door gods, hang up [prints of] Zhong Kui, nail up peachwood charms, paste up spring [couplet] plaques, and offer sacrifices to their ancestors." Meng also describes the yearly Nuo exorcism procession in which the god of the door and god of the gate take part:

At the Imperial Palace, on New Year's Eve, they perform the Great Rite of Expulsion and Exorcism. In connection with this, various individuals who serve in the Capital Security Office wear masks and clothes embroidered in a medley of colors. They carry gold spears, silver halberds, painted wooden swords, five-colored dragons and phoenixes, and, five-colored flags and streamers. That which incites the most excitement are the actors skilled in dressing up as Generals, the Commissioner of Seals, Assistants, Zhong Kui, the gods of the six ding 丁, the gods of the six jia 甲, divine soldiers, the ghost commissioners of the five directions, the stove

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82 Xu hu lao ren fan sheng lu 12A.
83 Meng liang lu 6.181. Paper horse (zhi ma 總馬) is a popular term for folk prints or New Year prints.
84 Meng liang lu 6.181.
lord, the earth god, [the gods of the] gate and the door, divine officers, and, other gods. From the Imperial Palace, [the procession] proceeds in pace with the beat of a drum, expelling the evil influences outside and beyond the Donghua 東華 Gate. [The procession] then drives [the evil influences] into the Longchi 龍池 Bay. This is referred to as ‘burying evil’ (mai sui 埋崇), and then [the rite] is over.

The final text, which also describes Lin’an, is the Wu lin jiu shi by Zhou Mi (1232-1308) written sometime between 1280 and 1290. Under a section describing the New Year’s Eve festivities, Zhou Mi writes, “Throughout the city [of Lin’an], from the tenth lunar month up to tonight, both inside and outside the Chaotian 朝天 Gate, [hawkers] compete to sell embroidered clothes, new calendars, all kinds of door gods, large and small, peachwood charms, Zhong Kui [prints], [prints of] lions, [prints of] tiger heads, as well as varicolored silk flowers, and all kinds of spring couplets, streamers, and scenic [prints]. [All of these] give the city a very festive [atmosphere].”

Although no door god prints from this time period have survived, an example of what these prints must have looked liked can be found in the painting Sui zhao tu 新年拜年圖 (New Year’s Visitation) by the artist Li Song 李嵩 (fl. 1190-1230). The painting depicts a festive scene of New Year well-wishers visiting a neighbor’s home. In the foreground of the print, on the right leaf (viewer’s right) of the double-leaved outer gate, a print depicting a door god in military garb is posted. It is logical to assume that there is a

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85 I have been unable to positively identify these twelve deities. It is possible that the gods of the six ding represent the gods of the six ding combinations within each sixty year cycle of the Celestial Stems and the gods of the six jia represent the gods of the six jia combinations within each sixty year cycle of the Celestial Stems.

86 Meng liang lu 6.181-182.

87 Wu lin jiu shi 3.384. An identical passage exists in his Gan chu sui shi ji 23b.

88 Reproductions of the painting can be found in Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu 1:18; Fong, “Wu Daozi’s Legacy” 7.
matching figure on the left leaf of the gate. Both leaves of the double-leaved inner door can be seen in the picture's background. The door gods on the inner door are dressed in civil garb. Li Song’s painting provides evidence of the division between civil and military door gods and their association with the inner door and outer gate. Arguably, Li’s painting provides us with the earliest surviving example of door god prints.

Another valuable source is Hong Mai’s *Yi jian zhi*, a collection of anecdotes which he started collecting between 1142 or 1143 and completed in 1161. A second collection was completed in 1166 and he continued to produce installments after that. These anecdotes provide valuable insight into everyday life of twelfth century China and the scope of the tales span from Jiangxi and Fujian to the Lower Yangzi region. Although half the original collection has been lost, a few tales do exist which include door gods and one can assume that there were additional tales. The first tale concerns a shamaness who regularly summons a spirit called Fifth Gentleman who can predict the future. When the shamaness is summoned to Prince Han Shi-zhong’s residence she is unable to summon the spirit and eventually learns that the spirit was refused entrance by the door gods:

The Spirit Wu-lang

In Qiantang there was a shamaness called Fourth Mistress. The spirit that possessed her was referred to as Fifth Gentleman. When

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89I have found only one anecdote which includes Zhong Kui. It is only a passing reference to him in which a spirit claims to have been captured only due to being weakened from a battle with Zhong Kui. See *Yi jian zhi* 2:8:8:250-251. Citations for the *Yi jian zhi* are based on the method devised by Valerie Hansen in *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 17, n. 17.


91The old administrative seat of Qiantang was located west of the present-day city of Hangzhou at the foot of Lingyin Mountain.
there were those who consulted her about their [future] good fortune or calamities, the spirit would speak through her and make predictions. Sometimes people would ask about their ancestors to test her in order to determine if she was genuine or fake. Even if they came from a thousand li away, she would [always] make her predictions in the same voice and not one of the requests was left unfulfilled. For this reason [Han 翰] Shiliang 世良, the elder brother of Commandery Prince of Xian-an, the Honorable Han 翰 [Shizhong 世忠, 1089-1151], put his intimate trust in her. He advised the Prince to order that she be summoned. The shamaness arrived at the Han’s residence but Fifth Gentleman did not appear. The shamaness was reverent but nervous. Unable to calm herself, she departed. Several days later, she just happened to be at the Lingyin Monastery when the spirit suddenly contacted her. The shamaness questioned the spirit as to why the spirit did not respond to her summons on that specific day. [The spirit] said, "The door gods barred my entrance and, thus, I was not able to come in!"

A second tale further demonstrates the role of door gods as household guardians:

Zhang Nianyu 張鲶魚

In Poyang 鄱陽 there was a pottery broker by the name of Zhang

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92 The old administrative seat of Xian-an was located east [of the modern administrative seat] of Yingshan County, Sichuan Province.
93 The Lingyin Monastery is located in present-day Zhejiang Province, the city of Hangzhou, northwest of West Lake, at the foot of Lingyin Mountain.
94 Yi jian zhi 5:3:12:735-736.
95 The old administrative seat of Poyang is located east [of the administrative seat] of modern Poyang County, Jiangxi Province.
Nian’er 張廿二. Because he had an ugly face and a wide mouth, [those in the] bazaar called him Sheat-faced Zhang.96

In the gui-si 犬巳 year [1173] of the Qiandao 乾道 reign period, because he had continually neglected to pay taxes owed, the sum was so large that he was unable to make restitution. So, together with his wife they then committed suicide. They had a young son who needed to be taken care of so their son-in-law Chen Fang 陳昉 presided over their family.

During the geng-zi 庚子 year [1180] of the Chunxi 淳熙 reign period, Fang accompanied fellow villager Zhu Sheng 朱生 to the fish ponds of Duchang 都昌 to catch fish to pay the family’s debt.97 As they were drinking wine in a shop, they saw Zhang followed by a yellow-robed figure walking quickly towards them. At that moment they became very frightened. When [the pair] arrived [and stood] before them, [Zhang] shouted angrily, scolding Fang, “I knew you would be here, thus I have come to demand your life.” Fang repeatedly paid obeisance by bowing with folded hands and invited them to sit and join him but [Zhang] did not acquiesce, saying, “I furthermore have summoned your mother-in-law to join us so that we all can meet to resolve this matter.” A short while later, it actually turned out that [Zhang] together with his wife came back, holding their infant son in her arms. Wielding a short iron staff he

96Nian yu refers to a sheat-fish or Chinese wels (parasilurus asotus) and is described as having a large, depressed head, a broad forehead, a big mouth, and a large belly. See Bernard E. Read, “Chinese Materia Medica from the Pen ts‘ao kang mu by Li Shih-chen, A.D. 1597: Part 9, Fish Drugs,” (Peking: Peking Natural History Bulletin, 1939) Number 171: 73-75.
97Duchang is located nine or ten li north of the modern small town of Wang 王, Duchang County, Jiangxi Province.
attacked Fang. Zhu grabbed the staff and told him, “Your daughter commanded your son-in-law to work with me [as a fisherman]. Now, if you kill him, how can he do his job or work?”

Zhang said, “I have been dead for seven or eight years, imprisoned by the officials of the underworld. I have suffered immeasurable pain, but my son-in-law did absolutely nothing to aid or release me [from the underworld]. Our infant son is also here because he died from a great blow from a fist, how will he be able to rest?”

At that time, two archers from the Office of Pacification were passing by. They had witnessed the quarrel but did not realize that [Zhang] was a spirit. They admonished them saying, “There is no reason why you should beat him to death in broad daylight. In order to settle this, it is appropriate that we get involved.” Zhang thereupon turned to the yellow-robed figure and said, “On my behalf, drive these men away from here.” The yellow-robed figure said, “You must first submit a written appeal to the Lord of the Court of Taishan. Obtain an official warrant and then and only then can I chase away the men. Otherwise wouldn’t you be acting without authorization?”

Everyone was becoming agitated, so around dusk, Zhang, his wife, as well as the yellow-robed figure thereupon bought some wine and rented a place to lodge overnight. Fang, Zhu, and the archers stayed together in adjoining rooms. On all counts there was no distinction between the humans and spirits. Throughout the night Zhang cursed Fang.
Furthermore, he sent the yellow-robed figure back to their [former] home to obtain some coins. After a long time, he returned carrying two thousand taels. The archers inquired from where he got it and he replied, “I took it from underneath a table in the Zhang household. At first, when the left god of the gate saw me he refused [me entrance], however, the right protector [of the door], on my behalf, reported that I could enter unobstructed, therefore, I obtained it.”

The next day, in the company of Zhu and Chen they together returned along the same road to Binzhou, northwest of the city of Poyang. Then suddenly [Zhang and the yellow-robed figure] disappeared. When Fang arrived at his abode, he still distinctly heard the sound of Zhang’s voice. A very short while later he was bedridden due to an illness. After a period of ten days his health stabilized and he was surely fortunate not to have died!

The above tale provides some interesting clues to twelfth century door gods. The door gods are referred to as men shen hu wei, god of the gate and protector [of the door]. The hu is implied since the terms are parallel to the terminology discussed in Chapter III. This term seems to have been in common use by the twelfth century. Chen Yuanjing, in his Sui shi guang ji, quotes from Lu Yuanming’s Lüyuanting (Song) Sui shi za ji: “On New Year’s Eve, prints of two gods are attached to the left and right door leaves. They are called the god of the gate and protector of the door (men shen hu wei).”

98 Binzhou is located northwest of the administrative seat of modern Poyang County, Jiangxi Province. 99 Sui shi guang ji 5.10b-11a.
We can also assume that the use of left and right imply the presence of only one double-leaved door. First, since Zhang was poor he probably did not have an outer wall, and second, since the god of the gate is on the left and the protector of the door is on the right we can assume that the entry to the Zhang house is a double-leaved door. It is also a reasonable assumption that these are door god prints since Zhang is too destitute to have carved figures (which are usually found on temple gates only) on his door. However, retaining both the terms ‘gate’ and ‘door’ hark back to the original spirit of the inner door and outer gate.

The most important tale to come from the Yi jian zhi is “Artisan Painter Hu”. It is probably the earliest surviving tale which focuses on the door gods themselves. It also describes several artistic elements which survive in modern-day door god prints.

Artisan Painter Hu

The artisan Hu Sheng 胡生 lived in the market district of Fuliang 浮梁. His [artistic] talent was plain and mediocre.

The townspeople were repairing the city god temple and offered [Hu] a few coins to paint two door guardian deities. Hu Sheng complained that the payment was too small, considering it enough only to fill a cup with wine. Therefore he only did an ink line painting [of the gods] without even completing their clothing or caps.

That night he dreamt of two giant men, seven chi 尺 tall, their manner and appearance were heroic and powerful, however the clothing they wore

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100 Yi jian zhi 9:10:10:1133-1134.
101 The administrative seat of Fuliang is located northeast of the modern administrative seat of Fuliang County, Jiangxi Province.
was extremely tattered and scant. They said [to Hu], “The two of us are dependent upon your [artistic] ability to obtain the things which we depend upon, and to receive offerings of incense and candles [from devotees], but our only regret is that because our clothing does not conform to the standard models, we are not revered by the people. We desire that, you sir, return and add magnificent clothing [to our images]. You will most certainly receive a reward and we will cause your skill to increase with each passing day and your name will be made known far and wide.” In the dream, [Hu] confused and nervous promised to do this, but after he woke up, he did not yet have the free time to investigate [what he dreamt about].

[After] ten days had gone by, when [Hu] was passing through the area [where the city god temple was located]. He saw in the distance a pair of figures, and it seemed as if he knew them from his past. Shocked, he fearfully realized [who they were]. On that very day he bought some gold leaf and colored paint, and set himself to work on his paintings. He painted [them wearing] golden armor, holding gold halberds, and the clothing they wore [made them look] supremely majestic. Those who saw them were even more filled with reverence and respect, however, [Hu] did not tell the people of his dream.

Later, [the door gods] came to Hu in another dream. Their majestic appearance made him shiver with awe and their clothing was befitting their bearing. They thanked him repeatedly.
From this time on, Hu received praise daily and, consequently, those who sought after him came one after another. It reached the point that when he married off his daughter he simply replaced the embroidery [used for a dowry] with only a painting.

When the precincts and streets of [his city] suffered from a plague, there was not a single household that did not suffer from sickness. Only the Hu family was spared. There were those who suspected that he possessed some special [magical] skill and they said this was the first time they had ever encountered [a person with such skill]. This affair took place during the Shaoxing 紹興 reign period [1131-1162]. Now Hu has already died, but the images of the [door] gods still remain.

Valerie Hansen notes, “The deities of The Record of the Listener [Yi jian zhi] were thought to pay close attention not only to the accuracy of their images but also to their upkeep. Damage to the image wounded the deity; likewise, repairs helped him.”¹⁰² She continues by citing the above tale as an example. The door gods are offended by Artisan Hu’s rendition of their images and seek retribution. Artisan Hu complies and is appropriately rewarded. The door gods are worried that their images do not conform to the ‘standard models’. The use of the term fa shi 法式 — (1) a pattern; a model; something to emulate; a standard; (2) legal ways or forms¹⁰³ — informs us that, at least by the twelfth century, door gods, or at least, temple gate guardians, had evolved a standardized iconography. Po Sung-nien points out that even among New Year prints

¹⁰²Hansen 55.
¹⁰³Yuan dong han ying da ci dian 856.
in general design changes were limited. He argues that, "... once a god's iconography had been fixed some devotees rejected any but the smallest changes in it."\(^{104}\) In addition, once a deity's iconography had been fixed and this fixed image had gained acceptance, any artist or artisan would be reluctant to change it because this icon would easily be recognizable by the masses regardless of regional boundaries. This would hold true for New Year prints, temple statues, mural paintings, or any medium which involves the depiction of a god.

Artisan Hu's deviance from this 'standard model' resulted in a decline in offerings to the two gate gods. Their followers, being unable to recognize them and/or unable to respect their shoddy depiction, were unwilling to offer candles and incense. Since a deity was thought to 'inhabit' its picture or statue, it is therefore appropriate for that image to be fitting of the deity. Valerie Hanson provides an excellent example of the detrimental effects when a deity's image falls into disrepair. An inscription (dated 1098) at a city god temple describes the god's statue as "... falling down and is of poor workmanship; it cannot suggest the god's grandeur. Dust has gathered on the image's face; its clothes are dark and torn. Those who visit only cursorily look at the image. Nothing conveys the mystery or the power of the god."\(^{105}\) This fate would surely have befallen the two gate gods had Hu not rectified their images.

This tale also illustrates the interaction and interdependency between mortals and gods. Treatment of a deity's image, good or bad, transfers itself to the deity itself. The social relationships prevalent in human society are also prevalent in the relationship between man and gods. According to Julian F. Pas, "The efficacy of a particular god's

\(^{104}\) Po 17.  
\(^{105}\) Hansen 52. The original text is Liangzhe jinshi 7.4b.
response to human prayers constitutes his/her ling 神 or spiritual potency and reputation. In daily worship, people burn incense to their gods, offer fruit and other kinds of food and wine, and present ‘paper’ money to accompany their prayers and make them more effective.” As demonstrated in this tale, this relationship extends to the upkeep of the deity’s image. If you maintain a deity’s image and make offerings, the deity will answer your prayers. Once your prayers are answered, you make offerings out of an assumed obligation to reciprocate and the deity continues assisting and protecting the worshippers and the cycle never ceases. In the case of Artisan Hu, he repaired the image of the gate gods and, in return, achieved not only fame but also protection from a deadly plague.

There are two other examples that further the argument that door gods had, by the twelfth century, established a standardized iconography. In a tale titled “Regimental Soldier Zheng Chao 鄭超 of Xin 信 Prefecture,” from the Yi jian zhi, the main character is described as being “…as big as a monastery door vajra.” In the Dong jing meng hua lu, under the section describing the festivities surrounding the “Seventh Night Festival” there is a description of a type of delicacy enjoyed at this celebration:

[The people] take oil, dough, sugar, and honey and mold it into the shape of a smiling child with dimples. This is referred to as a ‘guo-shi 果食 pattern’. It is wonderful and artful in all aspects. If you press down hard on it with your hands, [it will emit] a fragrance distinctively its own. If you buy several catties, among the pieces will [usually] be a pair of figures in

107 Yi jian zhi 7.5.1104.
coverlets, armor, and helmets similar in appearance to the image of [a pair of] door gods. Presumably this comes from the Fengliu 風流 [Mountains], but they do not know its origins. The image is referred to as the ‘Guo-shi General’ 果食將軍.198

Describing someone as looking like a door god or a gate vajra would conjure up the appropriate image in the listener’s or reader’s mind. If that image of the gods was similar to their description in “Artisan Painter Hu” then they must have been imposing figures indeed!

As for the tale “Artisan Painter Hu”, in addition to providing a glimpse into the appearance of twelfth century door gods, artisan Hu’s use of gold leaf (jin bo 金箔) is reminiscent of using gold leaf to highlight modern door god prints. Door god prints produced in Fengxiang 鳳翔 County, Shaanxi Province, are decorated with “three gold strips” (san jin cai 三金裁). After the addition of colors such as scarlet, carmine, yellow, green, or purple to the overall door god print, an artist applies a gold paint (ni jin fen 泥金粉), which is a coating material made of glue and powdered gold, as additional decoration.199

Further evidence alluding to the actual protective practices employed by the people of the eleventh and twelfth century is found in the origin of a Chinese idiom still popular today, “hanging on another person’s door” (bang ren men hu 傍人門戸), which describes a person who is unable to support himself but must depend on others for a living. This idiom is derived from a tale recorded by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1036-1101) about an

198 Dong jing meng hua lu 8.49. The Fengliu Mountain Range is located in the southeastern area of Lifan 理番 County, Sichuan Province.
199 Cao Haishui, “Mu ban nian hua li de Qin Qiong – Jingde,” in Shaanxi min jian mei shu yan jiu, (Xi’an: Shaanxi ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1988) 303.
argument between a mugwort figurine, a peachwood charm, and a pair of door gods. The tale is as follows:

   A peachwood charm looked up at a mugwort figurine and cursing said, “How insignificant you are, always hanging above me!” The mugwort figurine bent down and responded, “You are already half buried in the earth and yet you argue who is superior and who is inferior!” The peachwood charm was enraged. [This argument] went back and forth [causing] chaos without end. A door god broke it up and said, “We are all good-for-nothing. We just hang on a person’s door. Why use your spare time arguing over trivial things!”

If we assume that Su Shi adopted and incorporated everyday items from his own personal experience, one can see that the doors of the people were well protected with three separate prophylactic devices. The door gods and peachwood charms were replaced during the New Year celebration. Since the peachwood charms are described as being buried in the ground, we can infer that they are peachwood figurines and not spring couplets which were often referred to as taofu 桃符. This poses an interesting possibility that people displayed door guardians in both the printed format of door god prints and in carved figurines planted on the sides of the door. It may also be reasonable to assume that Su Shi incorporated these items because he thought that they were useless, implying that he did not believe in their protective powers.

Before proceeding any further, it is appropriate to discuss an interesting dilemma. By the late twelfth century it is apparent that door gods had achieved widespread
popularity. It is also apparent that their roles in the yearly Nuo exorcism had not abated since the first mention of Shen Tu and Yu Lei's participation in the first century Dong jing fu. Tales about and including door gods can be found in the Tai ping guang ji and the Yi jian zhi. Li Song's painting Sui zhaotu highlights the fact that door gods were depicted in both military and civil attire and that a separation between military door gods and civil door gods had existed by mid-twelfth century. The anecdote "Artisan Painter Hu" proves that a standardized iconography for door guardians had been established and was important enough that if an artist deviated from it the gods would not be respected or receive offerings. However, it is extremely noteworthy that, up to this point, there has yet to be any reference to a specific historical figure in the role of a door guardian. With the exception of Shen Tu and Yu Lei (and Zhong Kui), door gods are merely referred to as either men shen, men shen hu ling, or men shen hu wei. In fact, we still have to wait approximately another three hundred years until 1592 for the first appearance of a specific identification of a pair of door gods. This will be the legend of the two Tang dynasty generals Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde popularized in the novel Journey to the West. This will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter.
Chapter V Door Gods During the Thirteenth through Seventeenth Centuries

5.1 Yuan and Ming Historical Sources

According to Yuan and Ming dynasty historical sources, door gods flourished during this time period. A comment from a text known only as the Yue ling guang yi 月令廣義 demonstrates the rich variety of door god prints in existence during the Ming dynasty: “In recent times, they paint door gods patterned after various styles of military generals and court officials. They decorate the prints with ranks of nobility, deer, bats, spiders, treasure horses, vases, offering tables, and other images, all to obtain fame and prestige and to welcome auspicious blessings.”111 The legend of the origin of the two most famous and popular door gods, the Tang dynasty generals Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde, also appears during this period. It also becomes apparent that door god prints were not only widespread among the people but were also popular among the aristocracy.

Shen Bang’s 沈榜 (fl. 1590-1592) Wan shu za ji 宛署雜記 (preface dated February 19, 1592) contains detailed information regarding government expenditures. These expenditures include the amount of silver allotted to purchase new door god prints and peachwood couplets.112 According to the text, it was also acceptable for a government official to be allotted a limited amount of silver to actually replace the door god prints

111 Shen kao 12.35; Zhao ding yu wen 4.35b (p. 392). I have been unable to positively identify this text. In the rare book collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library there is a book with the same title attributed to Feng Yingjing 馮應京 (jinshi 1592) but I have been unable to examine this copy. Dun Lichen also quotes a text with an identical title in his Yan jing sui shih ji. See Derk Bodde, Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking, as Recorded in the Yen-ch'ing Sui-shih-chi by Tun Li-Ch'en, 2nd ed., revised, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965) 25.
112 The use of the term ‘peachwood couplet’ here does not refer to the Han dynasty boards made of peachwood upon which images of Shen Tu and Yu Lei were painted but instead to scrolls pasted on the sides of gates or doors inscribed with auspicious couplets. The earliest record of inscribing couplets on peachwood boards is from the tenth century and this practice was formalized by the fourteenth. See Hsieh and Chou 125.
and peachwood charms immediately upon assuming a new duty post. In some instances, a secondary amount was authorized for further replacements during the New Year celebration. Based on data gathered from a section on routine expenditures and operational expenses in the *Wan shu za ji*, listed below, are various government offices and the amount allotted for the purchase of door gods and peachwood charms.

(1) Metropolitan Circuit Censorate: When one assumes this post, they are allotted 0.8225 taels for the purchase of door gods, peachwood charms, ... [and other items].

(2) Investigation Bureau: When one assumes this post, they are allotted 0.5 taels for the purchase of four pairs of door gods and peachwood charms.

(3) Bureau of Domestic Customs: When one assumes this post, they are allotted 1.56 taels for the purchase of eight pairs of large and small door gods, peachwood charms, and other items.

(4) Headquarters, Court of the Imperial Clan: When one assumes this post, they are allotted a total of 1.74 taels for the purchase of five sets of door gods and five sets of peachwood charms for the main gate, the secondary gate, the east and west side gates, and the rear inner gate, and five table sets. For the first lunar month they are additionally allotted 0.62 taels for the purchase of fourteen pairs of small door gods, five pairs of peachwood charms, and three table sets.

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113 *Wan shu za ji* 13.103; Bo 52.
114 *Wan shu za ji* 15.130.
115 *Wan shu za ji* 15.131.
116 *Wan shu za ji* 15.131.
117 Reading *zhuo* 作为 *zhuo* 桌 for table.
118 *Wan shu za ji* 15.134.
(5) Governance Bureau: When one assumes this post, they are allotted a total of 0.738 taels for the purchase of four pairs of door gods and peachwood charms for the main gate and middle gates, and three table sets. For the first lunar month they are additionally allotted 0.338 taels for the purchase of eight pairs each of small door gods and peachwood charms, and one table set.\textsuperscript{119}

(6) Judicial Bureau: For the first lunar month they are allotted 0.392 taels for the purchase of one table set, four pairs of door gods and peachwood charms for the main gate and the secondary gate, and four pairs of small door gods.\textsuperscript{120}

(7) Record Keeper’s Office: For the first lunar month they are allotted a total of 0.264 taels for the purchase of two pairs of door gods and peachwood charms, three pairs of small door gods, and one table set.\textsuperscript{121}

(8) Various Yamens for the first lunar month: Offices of the Provincial Education Commissioner, Surveillance Bureau, Investigation Bureau, each purchase two pairs of door gods and peachwood charms, totalling 0.165 taels. The Headquarters of the Court of the Imperial Stud is allotted 1.432 taels for the purchase of twenty pairs of large and small door gods and peachwood charms for the main gate, secondary gate, east and west side gates, the [gate to the] shrine to the god of the soil, and, the door to the inner quarters. As for the headquarters of the Three Vice Ministers, each headquarters receives eleven pairs of small door gods and eleven pairs of peachwood charms, totalling 0.788 taels. The Office of Ceremonial Propriety is authorized 1.5 taels for the purchase of door gods and peachwood charms; the subofficial functionaries strip off [the old door gods and

\textsuperscript{119} Wan shu za ji 15.134.
\textsuperscript{120} Wan shu za ji 15.135.
\textsuperscript{121} Wan shu za ji 15.135.
peachwood charms]. The Yin-Yang School is authorized three pairs of door gods and peachwood charms, totalling 1.46 taels. The District [Magistrate] Office is authorized eleven pairs each large and small door gods, and, eleven pairs of peachwood charms for the main gate, secondary gate, east and west side gates, and, gate to the inner quarters, in all totalling 0.95 taels. Office of Grain Production and the Office for Monitoring Thieves, each get two pairs of door gods and two pairs of peachwood charms, totalling 0.34 taels. 

Other minor references enhance the details of Ming dynasty door gods as well as door gods in general. A brief reference to the gods of the gate, door, well, stove, and, privy is made by Chen Yi 陳沂 (1469-1538):

In this age they have entitled the gate 'Adjuvant' (cheng 承); the door 'Protector' (wei 尉); the well 'Lad' (tong 童); the stove 'Lord' (jun 君); and the privy 'Third Maiden' (san gu 三姑). As for all of these, in the past when someone was slain near the gate or who drowned themselves in a well or died near the stove or in the privy, people took them and made them gods in charge of these offices [respectively] and portraits of their images are [posted] thereat. This is probably the reason why. 

Chen’s brief statement requires two comments. First, while Chen proposes that the gods of the various household areas are deceased individuals who have been deified to supplicate the deceased’s spirit, this only applies to the goddess of the privy. There is no evidence that any of the historical or mythological figures who are depicted as door gods...
gods died near a door or gate. Second, the appearance of the title Protector of the Door (hu wei) in the twelfth century tale “Zhang Nianyu” proves that the term was in use at least two hundred years prior to Chen’s quote and that it was not bestowed upon the god of the door during the mid-fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.

Door gods inspired the artist Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509) to compose a poem in their honor entitled “Sending Off the Gate Gods” (Song men shen 送門神):124

Guarding the gate, looking haggard, two weary soldiers.

Many times I have wanted to carelessly smooth out your creases, rubbing them away.

I have searched for your honorable names, but you are merely old paper.

Upon whose gate do you hang, you must have a deep fondness.

I regard you with sympathy, traces of rain streaks having damaged your portrait.

The helmet you rely upon, infinitesimal insects continue to eat through its chin strap.

Yet, you have never turned toward your new gentleman and told him that you harbor ill will.

This night before the new year you only anticipate tomorrow.

Shen Zhou’s poem accurately describes the weathering of door god prints. These prints are crinkled and obviously damaged by insects and rain, saddening Shen. However, the last stanza of the poem implies that it is New Year’s Eve and with the coming morning they will be replaced with colorful new door god prints. Shen’s poem

124“Song men shen” qi yan lü 七言律 19a.
truly invokes the image of two weary soldiers who have manned their post for an entire year, enduring all of nature’s effects, never once expressing hatred or discontent, who are just hours away from being relieved from duty.

Evidence supporting the role or use of door gods in religious rituals is rare. In the Song dynasty, during the yearly Nuo exorcistic ritual, palace-guardian generals dressed up as door gods and took part in the procession. In modern times, Cao Haishui reported that individuals dressed as the door gods Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde led the annual horse-led shehuo [社火] procession as part of Mei County’s [Shaanxi Province] Spring Festival celebration.\textsuperscript{125}

Additionally, the fifteenth-century carpentry manual, \textit{Lu Ban jing} 魯班經, contains two references to the use of door gods in rituals associated with house construction. The text contains information regarding technical aspects of house and furniture construction, identification and use of carpentry tools, in addition to information regarding rituals and magic relevant to carpentry and house construction. The earliest surviving examples of the text date from the end of the Ming dynasty, however, the basis of the material dates from the Song and Yuan dynasties.\textsuperscript{126} The \textit{Lu Ban jing} does provide us with some of the only references to the role and use of door gods in religious rituals.

\textsuperscript{125}Cao Haishui 298-299. The \textit{Zhongguo fengsu cidian} defines shehuo as such, “In some places it is generally known as shehui (社會). Among the people it is popularly called nao wanyier (鬧玩意見). It consists of various types of theatricals which are staged by the people during festivals. It is popular in many places throughout the country . . The activities include walking on stilts, land boats [a model boat used as a stage prop in some folk dances], zhuma (竹馬) [bamboo sticks used as a toy horse], yangge (秧歌) dances, dancing dragons, dancing lions, large-headed babies, husky old men carrying their wives on their backs, etc. It is still popular among the people today. It refers to that popular entertainment which is generally performed during festivals, temple fairs, and temple gatherings,” (p. 637). For an account describing a shehuo see Feng Lide and Kevin Stuart, “Delighting the Gods in 1990: A Han Shehuo in Qinghai Province (PRC),” \textit{Asian Theatre Journal} 11.1 (Spring 1994), 35-63. Feng and Stuart note that there are many functions of a shehuo including exorcism, appeasement of the gods, enforcement of filial piety and Confucian values, relaxation and entertainment, and, an expression and appreciation of agriculture and the Spring Festival (35-36).

\textsuperscript{126}Ruitenbeek 1-2.
rituals.

The first ritual revolves around the dedication of the house ridge-pole. The concluding step of the ritual is a recitation to dedicate the house altar. The relevant stanza reads, "Gods of the door and protectors of the gate, kill all ghosts and exterminate spirits". The second ritual is meant to exorcise evil from a house. After a divine charm is written in the air, the following is shouted:

If there are any evil ghosts and spirits trying to steal in,
A golden whip will smash them into pieces at once.
The door gods and guardians of the gate should all be at their posts,
The god of the soil of our house will protect peace forever.

What Ruitenbeek translates as 'gods of the door and protectors of the gate' in the first example and 'door gods and guardians of the gate' in the second example is rendered, in both cases, in the original text, as 门神戸尉. Referring to door gods by this term can be traced back to the twelfth century 唐史杂记 and the tale "Zhang Nianyu" from the 永劫志. Since, the basis of the majority of the information in the 卢班经 can be attributed to the Song and Yuan dynasties, these rituals may also have antecedents in these periods.

5.2 The Door Gods Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde

The Tang dynasty generals Qin Qiong 秦琼 (?-638) and Yuchi Jingde 尉遲敬德 (585-658) are probably the best known and the most popular figures in modern door god prints. Door god prints featuring the two are printed in all the major woodblock

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127 Lu Ban jing 11b; Ruitenbeek 307.
128 Lu Ban jing 16b-17a; Ruitenbeek 312.
printing areas throughout China. The legend of their deification appears in several Ming dynasty collections of biographies of deities from Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The legend translated below is from a version of the *San jiao yuan liu sou shen da quan* 三教源流搜神大全 published in 1909 by Ye Dehui 葉德輝 (1864-1927). The preface to this version states it was supplied to Ye by Miao Quansun 謙荃孫 (1844-1919) and that it was a Ming dynasty reprint of the Yuan dynasty text *Hua xiang sou shen guang ji* 畫像搜神廣記 that Mao Jin 毛晋 (1598-1659) cited in his *Ji gu Ge Song Yuan bi ben shu mu* 汲古閣宋元祕本書目.\(^{130}\) Piet van der Loon, however, in a personal communication to Judith M. Boltz, noted that the version of the *San jiao yuan liu sou shen da quan* that Ye was given by Miao Quansun, was originally published in Jianyang 建陽, Fujian Province in the beginning of the seventeenth century.\(^{131}\) The legend, under the heading "The Two Generals [Who Became] Door Gods" (*Men shen er jiang jun* 門神二將軍) reads as follows:

Door gods are actually the two Tang dynasty generals Qin Shubao 秦叔寶 and Hu Jingde 胡敬德.\(^{132}\) Comment: Tang Taizong could not get any sleep because there were ghosts and goblins outside his [bedchamber] doors throwing bricks and playing with [roof] tiles. Their shouting and wailing [echoed] throughout all the chambers of the palace. Each night, there was no

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\(^{129}\) Qin Qiong’s biography is in *Jiu Tang shu* 68.2501-2503, *Xin Tang shu* 89.3757-3758; Yuchi Jingde, *Jiu Tang shu* 68.2495-2500, *Xin Tang shu* 89.3752-3755. There are numerous published examples of door god prints, from throughout China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde: Po 112-119; Wang Shucun, *Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu* 1: 54, 55, 144, 393, 2: 475, 688, 765, 803; Wang Shucun, *Paper Joss* 134-135. Also see the article by Cao Haishui for a discussion of the Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde theme in the New Year prints.


\(^{131}\) Boltz n. 146, 274-275.

\(^{132}\) Qin Shubao is Qin Qiong’s public name. Hu Jingde is an alternate name for Yuchi Jingde. He is also referred to by his personal name Yuchi Gong 盥.
peace and quiet. Taizong feared [the noises]. He reported this to his ministers. Qin Shubao stepped forth and said, "I, your vassal, throughout my life, have killed men like splitting melons. Their corpses piled up like ants. Why should I fear these demons? I vow that Hu Jingde and I will don full military dress and will stand at your door and keep watch. Taizong agreed. Qin [and Hu] stood guard that night and nothing bothered Taizong. [The next morning], Taizong praised the two men for standing guard all night without sleeping. Taizong commanded an artist to paint the images of the two generals in full [military] dress, holding jade axes, wearing whips on their belts, [carrying] polished bow and arrows, and [faces so] fearsome [as to cause one's] hair [to stand on edge]. Henceforth, they hung the images on the left and right sides of the palace doors and the haunting stopped. Later generations followed this custom and, consequently, [Qin and Hu] became door gods.

A small poem in the Journey to the West reads:

These two distinguished heroes and meritorious vassals,
Will be called Protector of the Gate for a thousand years,
And serve as God of the Door for ten thousand ages.  

Recent discoveries have provided textual evidence of the above legend dating earlier than Ye Dehui's 1909 publication date or of the early seventeenth century date of the text that Ye's version was based upon. The late Ming dynasty text entitled San jiao yuan liu sheng di fo zu sou shen da quan 三教源流聖佛祖搜神大全, located in the Naikaku bunko 内閣文庫 Depository, is possibly the Ming dynasty text which Ye Dehui

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133San jiao yuan liu sou shen da quan 348.
stated was the basis of his 1909 publication. The author is anonymous and the only identifying information is a set of characters on the last page, \textit{Xi tian zhu zang ban} 西天竺藏版. The entry on Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde is identical and the accompanying illustration is identical to the entry and accompanying illustration in Ye’s 1909 text.\textsuperscript{134}

The late Ming dynasty \textit{Xin ke chu xiang ceng fu sou shen ji da quan} 新刻出像曾補搜神記大全, illustrated, and published in six \textit{juan}, contains an almost identical passage.\textsuperscript{135} Although the author of the preface is anonymous, it is attributed to Luo Maodeng who states that he acquired the text from the Fuchun tang 富春堂 publishing house owned by the Tang 唐 clan of Nanjing. The preface is dated 1593. It is a redaction of the \textit{Xin ke chu xiang ceng fu sou shen ji da quan}, minus the illustrations, which appears in the Daoist Canon (HY 1466) under the title \textit{Sou shen ji} 搜神記. The legend of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde is identical in the two versions.\textsuperscript{136}

All the legends of Qin and Yuchi quoted in the above four texts end with the final two lines from the poem attributed to the \textit{Journey to the West}. The novel \textit{Journey to the West} is commonly attributed to Wu Chengen 吳承恩 (ca. 1506-ca. 1582) and the first extant edition of the novel was published in 1592, one year prior to Luo Maodeng’s preface to the \textit{Sou shen ji}. The novel provides detailed information surrounding events which lead up to the haunting of the Tang emperor Taizong, and the eventual appointment of Qin and Yuchi as door gods. It does not, however, provide any additional information regarding the legend itself other than an extensive literary elaboration. The full poem appearing at the end of this tale does provide a poetic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{134}San jiao yuan liu sheng di fo zu shen da quan 344.
\item \textsuperscript{135}Xin ke chu xiang ceng fu sou shen ji da quan 401.
\item \textsuperscript{136}Sou shen ji 440. This is not the \textit{Sou shen ji} attributed to Gan Bao 干寶 (fl. 317). This is a continuation of the aforementioned text attributed to Luo Maodeng.
\end{itemize}
description of the two generals which would be inspirational to any artisan wanting to create a door print:

They wore on their heads bright glimmering golden helmets,
And on their bodies cuirasses of dragon scales.
Their jeweled breastplates glow like hallowed clouds;
With lion knots tightly drawn,
And silk sashes newly spun.
This one had phoenix eyes staring into the sky to frighten the stars;
The other had brown eyes glowering like lightning and shining like the moon.
They were once warriors of greatest merit;
But now they became for all time the guardians of the gates,
In all ages the protectors of the home. 137

The recent publication of a text entitled *Xin bian lian xiang sou shen guang ji* 新編連相搜神廣記 may, with further study, revise the dating of the door gods Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde and, perhaps, is the earliest surviving version of Luo Maodeng’s sixteenth century version of the *Sou shen ji*. The text is housed in the Beijing tushuguan 北京圖書館. The colophon attributes the text to Qin Zijin 秦子晉 of Huainan 淮南, however there are no biographical references to anyone by this name. The dating of the text is debatable. Li Fengmao 李豐楙, in his 1989 introduction to the *Zhongguo minjian.xinyang ziliao huibian* 中國民間信仰資料彙編, notes that the text may be attributed to the Yuan dynasty, however, the compiler may be from the Ming dynasty. 138 The foreword of the

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138 Wang Qiugui 4.
1990 publication of the text by the Shanghai guji chubanshe states that the text and author are from the Yuan dynasty and the text was published in Jian'an but no explanation is provided as to how or why these conclusions were reached. Furthermore, it is debatable whether or not this text could be a version of the Yuan dynasty text Hua xiang sou shen guang ji quoted in Mao Jin’s catalog which Ye Dehui claimed to be the basis for his San jiao yuan liu sou shen da quan.

Mary H. Fong believes that the original legend could have been written down during the latter Tang dynasty (618-906), but was lost, eventually resurfacing in the Yuan dynasty text Hua xiang sou shen guang ji. Fong rationalizes that since the text was of Yuan dynasty origin, that the legend was known during the Song dynasty and that “... both visual and literary documentation has affirmed that the legend of Qin Shubao and Yuchi Gong was known, and that these two generals had already gained wide recognition as door gods during the Northern Song (960-1127).” Fong supports this statement by citing as evidence the appearance of door gods in Li Song’s Sui zhao tu and the comments on the sale of door gods from such Song texts as Dong jing meng hua lu and Meng liang lu. However there is absolutely no surviving evidence, literary or artistic, which supports Fong’s theory. There is no proof that the door gods in the painting Sui zhao tu are Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde. In fact, there is no evidence to support the deification of any historical figure as a door god prior to the 1592 appearance of the legend of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde in the Journey to the West. Prior to this, door gods are either referred to as being Shen Tu and Yu Lei, of Han dynasty origin, or, they are referred to simply as menshen or a variant of the term.

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139 Fong, “Wu Daozi” 8.
140 Fong, “Wu Daozi” 7.
141 Fong, “Wu Daozi” 7-8.
Fong accepts both the existence of the *Hua xiang sou shen guang ji* and the inclusion of the legend of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde in the text. The *Xin bian lian shang sou shen da quan* does not contain the legend nor any reference to the legend of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde. It does, however, contain biographies of the door guardians Zhong Kui and Shen Tu and Yu Lei. Even if we accept the Yuan dating of the *Xin bian lian shang sou shen da quan*, why would the legend be omitted? Any idea would be pure conjecture. First, the legend could have been omitted on purpose by the author. Moreover, it could have been lost from the surviving version of the text, or it might not have come into existence until sometime during the Yuan or early Ming dynasty. Regardless, Fong's hypothesis, stated as if fact, is extremely misleading.\(^{142}\)

Bo Songnian's proposal that the two Tang generals probably became door gods during the fourteenth century is more plausible.\(^{143}\) According to Bo's hypothesis, the legend could have existed in oral form during the fourteenth century, was eventually recorded,\(^{144}\) and then was incorporated into the *Journey to the West*. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that a tale surrounding such famous historical figures would go unrecorded or even unmentioned if it had originated during the late Tang as suggested by Fong. If these two generals were being depicted as door gods as early as the late Tang, it is also extremely unlikely that they would remain anonymous and go unmentioned in any subsequent literary works.\(^{145}\)

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\(^{142}\)Fong is not the only scholar to relay misleading information or unsubstantiated claims regarding the door gods Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde. When other scholars (Wang Shucun, *Zhongguo min jian nian hua* 61) discuss the historical evolution of door gods, they often include Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde in a section describing the Tang dynasty. The two generals are historical figures of this period, however, as has been proven; they did not become door gods until sometime between the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

\(^{143}\)Po 106.

\(^{144}\)Bo, as part of his hypothesis, does not propose where the legend might have been recorded or when. He also does not propose when or from where Wu Chengen might have heard of this legend.
5.2.1. Yuchi Jingde as a Solitary Door God

Hanzhong New Year print artists currently produce a door god print that is called ‘Paired Jingde’ (dui Jingde 對敬德) which is a pair of mirror image black-faced images of Yuchi Jingde. The inspiration for this print comes from the Ming dynasty play Nan ji deng xian (南極登仙). The plot of the play is as follows: During the Tang dynasty there was a famous medical practitioner, Sun Simiao 孫思邈, who forsook government office and lived on Zhongnan山南 Mountain. Tang Taizong’s empress was ill and none of the imperial physicians were able to cure her. At the recommendation of one of his ministers, he summoned Sun Simiao to the palace. Sun successfully diagnosed the empress as being pregnant and assisted her in giving birth to the heir apparent. Taizong enfeoffed Sun Simiao as Prince of Medicine (Yao Wang 藥王) and decreed the second day of the second lunar month to be the day he was to be sanctified. Yuchi heard about this affair and admonished the Emperor saying it was inappropriate to enfeoff a mere physician as a Prince. Yuchi requested that Sun be recalled and went to fetch him. Yuchi told him that he should not have been promoted to imperial office just for curing an illness, explaining that it was extremely difficult to achieve sainthood. They then wagered on whether Sun could achieve sainthood.

Around this time, a dragon king had an ulcer in his throat, so he changed into the guise of a scholar and approached the residence of Sun Simiao. Sun saw through his

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146 There are stories about both Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde which survive in the tenth century anthology Tai ping guang ji. For Qin Qiong, 435.11.24a and 191.14.25b; for Yuchi Jingde, 146.4.42b-43a, 191.12.25a-25b, and 493.9.22a. However, these stories focus on their roles as meritorious ministers. There is a door god print which survives from the Ming dynasty which Wang Shucun labels as being Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde, however, he provides no detailed date other than the dynasty. In addition, there is nothing in the print itself which would identify the two figures as Qin and Yuchi. See Wang Shucun, Min jian nian hua (Beijing: Ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1985), print number 1, p. 1-3. For a description see p. 1 of the afterword.

146 Zhongnan Mountain is located fifty li west of the present-day administrative seat of Changan 長安 County, Shaanxi Province.
disguise and ordered him to revert to his original form, and then cured the dragon's ailment. As a reward for curing his ulcer, the dragon king told Sun that he could achieve sainthood in Fenghuo 風火 Cavern. The dragon king then commanded that Sun Simiao be led to the cavern. After Sun had complete his studies, he was deified as the Prince of Medicine. Afterwards, he summoned Yuchi Jingde to make good on his wager by standing a shift outside his door as guard. Based on this episode, Hanzhong print artists designed the 'Paired Jingde' door print.\(^{147}\)

### 5.3. Door Gods as Popularized in Popular Dramas and Novels

Door gods attained an even greater popularity during the Yuan and Ming dynasties due to the influence of dramas and popular novels. There was a substantial increase in the number of paired figures who were adopted as door guardians. Many of the legends surrounding these figures were taken directly from popular novels and dramas. There was also an increase in the variety of door god prints in use. People no longer limited themselves to paired martial figures but increasingly used door prints whose artistic symbolism expressed desires for wealth, longevity, good health, and general prosperity. Surviving prints which portray door gods striking poses and wearing costumes and facial make-up based on regional dramas attest to the influence of theatricals on the culture of door gods.\(^{148}\)

#### 5.3.1. The Ghost of the Pot

The Yuan dynasty courtroom drama The Ghost of the Pot (Pen er gui 盆兒鬼) provides evidence of the appearance of door gods and their role during the Yuan

\(^{147}\)Wang Shucun, “Hanzhong” 254-255; Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua 62-63. For an example of this kind of print see Wang Shucun, “Hanzhong”, print number 9 in the front of this book.

\(^{148}\)For examples see Po 112-115, 118-119.
dynasty. In Act I of the play, a vendor by the name of Yang Guoyong while travelling stops by a house and asks for temporary lodging for the night. The house belongs to an ex-prostitute, Pie Zhixiu and her husband, Zhao the Jug, who is a potter and minor thug. Pie and Zhao decide to rob Yang of his money and his goods. At first, they just take his money and valuables but after they hear him lamenting his fate and vowing to report this incident to Judge Pao, they kill him and cremate his body in the kiln. Finally, Zhao grinds his bones into powder, mixes it with clay, and, fashions it into a pot.

In Act II, Pie and Zhao are constantly tormented by the Spirit of the Kiln. The Spirit reprimands the two for not only the physical act of murder, but also for dishonoring the potter’s trade by using the kiln for such a horrendous crime. Yang, whose spirit is trapped in the pot, cannot transcend the mortal realm. The Spirit of the Kiln demands Pie and Zhao give up their criminal ways, offer sacrifices to the kiln, and, prepare a proper burial for Yang, all as repentance. Instead, in the morning, Zhao sells the pot to Zhang the Headstrong.

Act III centers around the interaction between Zhang and the spirit Yang. Zhang the Headstrong does not fear ghosts. When Yang tries to talk to Zhang, the latter only dismisses it as the wind. When Yang trips Zhang, he only blames it on his feet getting tangled up in the weeds. Only after some serious harassment does Zhang finally realize that a real ghost has somehow entered his house. When Zhang asks how the ghost got into his home, Yang informs him that his spirit is trapped in the pot and that Zhang had carried him in under his robe and consequently the door gods did not notice the ghost. At this point Zhang the Headstrong curses his door gods:

ZHANG: (curses the door gods) Let me give those door gods a good talking-
to. Door gods! How did you happen to let a ghost get by you? What are you good for anyway?

(Melody: *Ma lang er*)

On New Year’s Day I put you up,
Offered you sweetmeats and tea,
In hopes that you’d drive out forces malign,
In hopes that you’d guard this my home.

(Refrain)
Pah! I had you portrayed
In grim and foul face,
But what do you do but doze off, O gods of the gate!
Both charms of peach wood, what good do they do?  

Several issues should be discussed at this point. How did a ghost slip past the door gods? Ruling out the possibility that the door gods are incompetent, and since the spirit of Yang has been imprisoned in the pot carried under Zhang’s robe, in all likelihood, the door gods overlooked the ghost. Zhang mentions that he offered sweetmeats and tea to the door gods on New Year’s Day. Here is further evidence supporting the hypothesis that door gods do receive offerings. Finally, the line “In grim and foul face” gives us evidence of the physical appearance of door gods in Yuan dynasty prints.

By the end of Act III, Zhang, having listened to the tale of Yang’s ordeal, agrees to take Yang before Judge Bao’s court to present his case. Act IV begins with Judge Bao calling his court to order. Zhang announces that he has a grievance to be heard. Before---

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Judge Bao, he raps on the pot, but nothing happens. Furious at Zhang for wasting his time, Judge Bao expels him from the court. Outside the court, Yang apologizes for not appearing but explains that the door gods of the courthouse would not let him enter the courtroom. Zhang again goes before Judge Bao and tells him of Yang and the pot, saying:

Command those peevish door gods
Not to block my rattling ghost of the pot.
(Melody: Xiao Liang zhou)
I appeal to your Honor, look into this case.
Would I make schemes and lie?
It’s your gods of the gateway, like fierce demon kings,
Broadaxes firmly in grasp.
Your Honor, Just look at them!
How can a mere ghost survive terror so stark?

PAO: Yes, of course! Every house, large or small, has its door gods, and a murdered ghost would be blocked from entering. Zhang Qian, bring me gold and silver paper money.

(In verse)
In my mind I’ve hatched a plan.
Set out the paper cash.
Goblins and demons should not be let past,
But a ghost with a grievance may safely step in.150

After the offerings, the spirit Yang is able to enter and plead his case. Pie and Zhao are

150Hayden 118-119.
brought in, found guilty, and sentenced to death by flogging, all of which is witnessed by spirit Yang. Finally, Judge Bao decrees that the criminals’ estate was to be divided between Zhang the Headstrong and Yang’s father.

Interestingly enough, Judge Bao’s door gods stopped Yang possibly because the pot was not concealed from view as in Act III. Again, clues to the physical appearance of Yuan door gods can be garnered from the above passage. They hold battle-axes and are compared to fierce demon kings. Based on Zhang’s exclamation, even he seems impressed by their fierce appearance. On Judge Bao’s insistence, gold and silver paper money were offered to the door gods. This again is another excellent example of offerings being made to door gods. In this case, the money can be assumed to be a bribe to the door gods to permit spirit Yang to enter the courtroom.

5.3.2. The Celebratory Gathering of the Transcendent Officials of Blessings Wealth, and Longevity

Zhu Youdun’s 朱有燾 (1379-1439) drama The Celebratory Gathering of the Transcendent Officials of Blessings, Wealth, and Longevity (Fu Lu Shou xian guan qing hui 福祿壽仙官慶會) attempts to extend the traditional Nuo exorcism rite held on New Year’s Eve into a full-length drama.\textsuperscript{151} The drama, based on its colophon, is dated to the tenth lunar month of 1433. The door gods portrayed in this drama are Shen Tu and Yu Lei. The plot is that the Transcendent Officials of Blessings, Wealth, and Longevity plan to descend to earth and require Zhong Kui and the door gods to descend before them to rid the world of evil. Although the entire drama revolves around Zhong Kui and the origin of his legend, the play still contains interesting information regarding the door gods.

\textsuperscript{151}For a detailed analysis of this drama see Idema 46-52.
In Act II we learn that the door gods are not home when two messengers, on behalf of Zhong Kui, arrive to inform them of their assigned mission. Later in the act we learn that Shen Tu and Yu Lei were attending a meeting sponsored by the Queen Mother of the West (Xi wang mu 西王母). The actual exorcism is enacted in Act III. Zhong Kui, accompanied by Shen Tu and Yu Lei, proceeds to eventually expel four ghosts. Then he commands Shen Tu and Yu Lei to take up their positions and guard the gate. This pairing of Shen Tu and Yu Lei with Zhong Kui seems to have been popular during the mid-sixteenth century. At the top of the painting “Zhong Kui in a Snowy Grove” is a poem inscribed by the artist Wen Jia 文嘉 (1501-1583). The poem, which was inscribed on New Year’s Eve, January 28, 1549, provides some insight into what door prints of Shen Tu and Yu Lei might have looked like during this period:

With beards bristling like hedgehogs’ spines and mouths filled with frightful teeth,
Gesturing with chin and hand, guarding the gate are [Shen] Tu and [Yu] Lei.¹⁵²

5.3.3. Agitated Door Gods

The plot of Mao Wei’s (jinshi 1616) theatrical Agitated Door Gods (Nao men shen 門神) poses an interesting dilemma -- what if the old door gods are unwilling to vacate their post at the end of the year? The play opens with the arrival of the new door gods and the refusal of the old door gods to vacate their post. Because the old door gods refuse to be relieved, the new door gods just stand around not knowing what to do. Eventually, all the household gods -- the God of the Stove, Zhong Kui, the Purple Goddess of the Privy, the Wealth Gods of the Five Roads (Wu lu cai shen 五路財神), and,

¹⁵² Little 19.
the two transcendants He and He -- arrive in an attempt to persuade the old door gods to abdicate their position, but with no success. The old door gods believe that having stood guard for a whole year, never wavering from their post, that it is unfair to be peeled off the gate only to have their scraps tossed to the ground and trampled into the dirt. The household gods counter by saying that even if they stay, eventually they would peel off from wear and tear. Both sides continue to argue, causing a huge commotion. This attracts the attention of representatives of the Jade Thearch who begin observing the argument. They report the entire exchange to the Jade Thearch, who becomes furious. He sends an Investigating Commissioner of the Nine Heavens to settle the affair. The custom of replacing the door gods on New Year’s Eve was an ancient custom, thus, the verdict was to allow the new door gods to assume their rightful post and banish the old door gods to the Sand Gate Island, which is a desolate and uninhabited place.153

This theatrical suggests that when the door god prints are changed the door gods themselves also change. The evidence outlined in the previous chapters suggested that the new door god prints were for the old door gods. The replacement of the old door gods with new door gods is an analogy to old government officials not wanting to leave their post when their replacements arrive. I do not believe that Mao Wei was expressing a popular belief about door gods.

5.3.4. Zhao Gongming and Daoist Master Burning Lamp

Zhao Gongming 趙公明 and Daoist Master Burning Lamp (Ran Deng Dao Ren 燃燈

153Qu hai zong mu ti yao 13.635; Zhuang Yibi 6.504; Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua 75-77. Shamen Island is the name of an islet off the coast of Shandong Province.
two characters from the Ming dynasty novel *Enfeoffment of the Gods* (*Feng shen yan yi* 封神演義), commonly attributed to either Xu Zhonglin 許仲琳 (Ming) or Lu Xixing 陸西星 (fl. mid-16th century), are coupled as door gods. The novel is a fictional account of the uprising and eventual overthrow of King Zhou 紂 of the Shang 商 dynasty by King Wu 武 of the Zhou 周 dynasty. Zhao Gongming, supporting King Zhou, and Daoist Master Burning Lamp, supporting King Wu, are adversaries. The two are paired because of an account of a battle between them. 154

As door gods, certain character attributes, based on their descriptions in the novel, make them easily identifiable. 155 Zhao Gongming is portrayed mounted on a tiger, holding a staff in one hand and a weapon called the Golden Dragon Scissors in the other. Burning Lamp is mounted on a deer, holding a sword in one hand and a weapon called the Universal Ruler in the other.

Why these two were chosen as door gods is open to speculation. One reason is the simple fact that they are paired against each other in the novel. When door god prints are posted, the door gods face inward so that they can see anything that may attempt to enter the door. This pose also presents the illusion that the two are facing off, preparing to confront each other in battle, thus imitating an action scene from the novel. At the novel's conclusion, each individual who died was canonized and appointed to an official post. In the case of Zhao Gongming, this might have influenced his adoption as a door god. In the novel, he is deified the True One Realized Lord of the Dragon and Tiger Mysterious Altar (*Zheng yi long hu xuan tan zhen jun* 正一龍虎玄壇真君) and his

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155 The two are popular subjects among door god prints produced in Hanzhong 漢中, Shaanxi Province. See Wang Shucun, “Hanzhong he Hanzhong men shen,” *Shaanxi min jian mei shu yan jiu* (Xi'an: Shaanxi ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1987) 251-252. For examples of these prints see Wang, *Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu* 1:139 (Hanzhong, Shaanxi) and 2:767 (Liaocheng 聊城, Shandong). Also see Po 178-179.
duties are “... to welcome the blessings of auspicious happiness and chase criminals in flight.” In addition to being a skilled general, these additional qualifications would make Zhao a powerful door god.

5.3.5. Cao Bao and Yao Shaosi

Cao Bao and Yao Shaosi were popularized in the novel Enfeoffment of the Gods and have been adopted as door gods by Nanjing area artists. Interestingly, they are related to Zhao Gongming and Daoist Master Burning Lamp mentioned above. Cao Bao assists Burning Lamp in his first fight with Zhao Gongming and Yao Shaosi is a disciple of Zhao Gongming. After their deaths, Cao Bao is deified as the Celestial Worthy of Receiving Treasures (Na zhen tian zun) and Yao Shaosi is deified as the Transcendent Official of Profitable Markets (Li shi xian guan). Obviously, because of their duties, Cao Bao and Yao Shaosi would be popular door gods among merchants.

5.3.6. Meng Liang, Jiao Zan, and, Mu Guiying

The Ming dynasty historical novel Romance of the Yang Family Mansion (Yang jia fu yan yi) is a popular source for door gods. Meng Liang and Jiao Zan, two bandits from the novel, have been adopted as door gods by Hanzhong printmakers. Meng Liang, a bandit chief, is described as being strong as a mountain,
unparalleled in strength. He had several hundred followers and made his living by
looting. He was so powerful that no government troops dared try to capture him. Yang
Yanzhao 楊延昭 (958-1014) knew of Meng’s foolhardiness and that he had been arrested
three times and escaped three times. Yang goes to Meng’s mountain stronghold in an
attempt to recruit him to resist the Liao troops. Meng agrees to support Yang and tells
Yang of a bandit by the name of Jiao Zan.

According to Meng, Jiao’s stronghold is located in the treacherous Bajiao 芭蕉
Mountains and he has several hundred followers.\(^{161}\) When Jiao was born his face was
cinnabar red in color, his eyes resembled copper bells, and his cheekbones jutted out.
Not one out of ten thousand men could compare in bravery. The only way to defeat the
Liao troops would be to recruit men like Jiao Zan. Yang agrees and asks Meng to travel
to Bajiao Mountain to recruit Jiao Zan to join their cause. However, Jiao refuses. Yang
and Meng combine their forces and attack Jiao’s stronghold, eventually capturing Jiao.
Having been taken prisoner, Jiao surrenders and joins their cause. Yang enfeoffed both
men as Vice Commanders, and they assisted Yang in resistance against the Liao
dynasty.\(^{162}\)

In a separate incident in the novel, there is an account of Jiao stealthily stealing
horses from the Liao government. For this reason, prints of these two are also found
pasted to the gates of horse pens, ox sheds, and pig stys. Hanzhong door prints depict
both Meng Liang and Jiao Zan wearing multicolored robes, colored trousers, and tall
boots. Meng sports a full beard, holds a battleaxe, and carries a large bottle-gourd on
his back. Jiao holds a steel whip and carries a military signal flag on his back. The

\(^{161}\)The Bajiao Mountains are located in sixty \(li\) south of the administrative seat of modern day Sishi 恩施
County, Hubei Province.

\(^{162}\)Wang Shucun, “Hanzhong” 256.
average print measures fifty-three cm. vertically and twenty-six cm. horizontally.\textsuperscript{163}

Mu Guiying 穆桂英, a valiant female general popularized in the same novel, was also adopted as a door god. In the novel she fought on behalf of the Yang clan. She is noted for fighting side by side with her eight elder sisters, nine younger sisters, seven elder sisters of the Yang clan, members of the blond haired Ma 马 clan, and others, in the great defeat of the Army of the Celestial Gate. Unlike most door gods, she is not paired with another door god but instead faces a mirror image of herself. She is typically portrayed wearing a Yu Ji 娃姬 headdress,\textsuperscript{164} long trousers and a short robe. She wears a sleeveless overcoat with lapels protecting the nape of her neck and her shoulders. She wears a silk ribbon tied around her waist, a jade sword strapped to her back, and she holds a kerchief in a raised fist.\textsuperscript{165}

\section*{5.3.7. Ma Wu and Yao Qi}

Ma Wu 马武 and Yao Qi 姚期 were two famous generals of the Eastern Han dynasty popularized and adopted as door gods based on their roles in the novel Romance of the Eastern Han Dynasty (Dong Han yan yi 東漢演義). Unlike other stories, there was no direct interaction between Ma Wu and Yao Qi in the novel other than the fact that they supported opposing factions. Ma Wu was chosen as a door god for his martial skills and the fact that he had graduated first during the provincial military examinations. Yao Qi was also a brave warrior who was known for his filial piety toward his mother.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{163}Wang Shucun, “Hanzhong” 256.
\textsuperscript{164}Yu Ji (?-202 BCE) was the mistress of Xiang Yu (?-192 BCE) 項羽, who ended the Qin 秦 dynasty by defeating its army. I assume a Yu Ji headdress is based on what Yu Ji supposedly wore or was portrayed wearing.
\textsuperscript{165}For an example print see Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu 1: 59, 92.
These two are commonly depicted wearing purple and gold helmets with a projecting pheasant’s feather and embroidered ceremonial court robes. A fox tail is draped over their shoulders and they wear jade belts around their waist. Against their chests they hold ivory tablets of civil office. Ma Wu’s face is painted red, green and black and Yao Qi’s face is painted black except for his nostrils and eye sockets, and his cheeks are decorated with violet lines. Hanzhong prints measure seventy and a half cm. vertically and forty-five cm. horizontally and are printed with four-colored woodblocks.167

5.3.8. Wu Zixu and Zhao Yun

Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (?-484 BCE) and Zhao Yun 趙雲 (?-229) have been adopted as door gods based on a story from the mid-sixteenth century anthology Qing ping shan tang hua ben 清平山堂話本.168 This tale shares one common element with the legend of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde’s deification as door gods. Although the legend of Wu Zixu and Zhao Yun does not specifically state they were made door gods, at the end of the tale it states they were made ‘door generals’ (men jiang 門將). Unlike the other stories which have influenced door print artists, this tale directly associates the two generals with the door:

After [Song] Taizu 宋太祖 (r. 960-976) had passed away, and [Song] Taizong 宋太宗 (r. 976-997) abdicated the throne to [Song] Zhenzong 宋真宗 (r. 997-1022), the nation entered a time of peace without incident.

168For an example print see Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu 1: 141. Also see 1: 175 and 2: 768 and Po 176-177 for examples of mirror images of Zhao Yun as a door print.
Zhenzong issued an edict to his historiographer to elaborate on the collected biographies of famed ministers of dynasties past. He then commanded horses be put to his carriage and for the imperial tour to proceed to the Wu Ancestral Temple. Inside the temple he burned incense and ordered his Grand Councilor to pay obeisance on his behalf. Subsequently, he posed a question. Inquiring about Han Xin (?-196 BCE), Zhenzong asked, “After Xin revolted against the Han he was put to death. How could he have received food offerings in a temple? He should have been demoted out of the temple!” Minister Zhang inquired into this and sent up a memorial: “Li Ji (594-669) of the Tang spoke flattering words [which resulted] in Gaozong almost losing the country. During this time, Gaozong desired to establish a Wu ancestral [temple] but all his ranking ministers did not agree. Ji said, ‘As for family affairs, why must you ask the ranking ministers?’ Thereupon he established the Wu ancestral [temple], which brought danger upon the great Tang. This man also could not enter the temple.”

Zhenzong said, “Han Xin and Li Ji both had committed great crimes and were demoted from the temple. Even though Zhuge Liang’s achievements were humble, he was a loyal and virtuous official who could not be subjugated.”

The memorial requested, “Zhao Chongguo (137 BCE-52 BCE) was a famous general of the Han dynasty. At the age of seventy he assumed Han Xin’s position. Li Mao’s 李茂 (Tang) might shook all of
China. This meritorious minister of the Tang could serve in the same position as Li Ji.” Zhenzong agreed with this.

Furthermore, the memorial, [read]: “Wu Zixu once flogged the corpse of a superior, and Zhao Yun once loudly rebuked a superior’s mother, these two men are not worthy of entering the temple.”

Zhenzong said, “These two men were also outstanding heroes. They can be placed in front of the door to receive sacrifices.” To this day, at the Wu Ancestral Temple, they have served as door generals.169

5.3.9. Yang Bo and Xu Yanzhao

Yang Bo 楊波 and Xu Yanzhao 徐延昭 were two loyal ministers who are popularized in the drum song Xiang lian pa 香連帕. They are famous for assisting the heir apparent of the Ming dynasty Zhu Yijin 朱翊鈞 (1563-1620/r. 1572-1620) in ascending the throne after the death of his father Zhu Zaigou 朱載坖 (1537-1572/r. 1566-1572). The two men were responsible for capturing and executing Li Liang 李良, who had attempted to usurp the throne.

After the death of Zhu Zaigou, Li Liang blockaded the imperial palace, cutting it off from the outside, in an attempt to seize power. Xu Yanzhao, using a copper hammer, and followed by Vice Minister of the Ministry of War Yang Bo, burst through the palace gates to break the siege. Yang Bo led troops to arrest Li Liang who was eventually beheaded for his crime of treason. Thereafter, they remained by the side of the heir apparent and assisted him in all affairs of state, restoring peace and prosperity to the throne and the nation.170

169 Qing ping shan tang hua ben 290.
Wang Shucun, based on his research on Hanzhong door god prints, suggests the two were adopted as door gods because they broke down the palace gates and removed Li Liang and the traitorous ministers. This notion translates well to the role of door gods, implying that Yang Bo and Xu Yanzhao will enter a home and root out evil spirits. Xu Yanzhao is depicted wearing imperial robes and holding a hu tablet, which is a tablet held by a civil official when making an appearance before the emperor. Yang Bo is depicted wearing imperial robes, a five-tufted beard, and holding a sword which is a symbol of his post in the Ministry of War.171

As can be seen from the sampling above, the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries saw an explosion in the rise of historical figures who eventually came to be considered door gods. Interestingly, prior to the 1592 appearance of the legend of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde in the Journey to the West, there is no surviving evidence which alludes to any historical figure being deified or used as a door god. Other than referring to door gods as men shen or men shen hu wei, Shen Tu and Yu Lei are the only figures who are referred to by name. Prints which depict door gods in operatic costumes and facial makeup directly attest to the influence of regional operas on folk prints. The fact that one can identify a door god by such things as weapons, clothing, facial appearance, or stance, attests not only to the influence of opera but also the influence of popular novels as well as a "standardization" or "stylization" in the iconography of door gods. Depending on the situation, the glorification of a historical figure in a novel could lead to his 'deification' as a door god. The number of individual paired figures would only be limited by the number of novels and regional operas. As suggested by Po Sung-Nien, a deity's cult, which was grounded in a regional drama,

170 Wang Shucun, "Hanzhong" 257.
could easily transcend regional boundaries with an increase in the popularity of the relevant drama.\textsuperscript{172} This argument may hold true for Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde, who may have started as regional door gods and then became national with the popularization of the legend in the \textit{Journey to the West}.

\textsuperscript{171}Wang Shucun, “Hanzhong” 257.
\textsuperscript{172}Po 171.
Chapter VI  The Qing Dynasty

6.1 Qing Historical Sources

Qing dynasty sources further illustrate the continuance of the custom of posting door god prints during the New Year’s festival. Gu Lu’s 清嘉錄 (fl. 19th century) Qing jia lu 清嘉錄, a descriptive account of popular customs in Jiangsu Province, provides one such account:

[On New Year’s] eve the door gods are replaced. It is customary to paint images of Qin Shubao and Yuchi Jingde. They are printed in color on paper and pasted on small doors.

Lu Weitang’s 陸偉堂 Men shen shi 門神詩:173

Your great stature has been propagated by your paintings,

We meet each other once a year.

Hanging a piece of peach[wood] and a length of cord,

Your human cheeks, plum [red], discernible through the rising mist.

One ought to rely upon the strength of their doorkeeper,

Who is capable of warding off evil in advance.

The benefits you return are cherished by the Metropolitan Graduates,

Even on the Double Fifth they suddenly take advantage of your authority.174

In section I.D. of the introduction, I mention a category of door god prints which do not portray the common deified military figures. These prints express the desire for

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173I have been unable to identify Lu Weitang or locate this poem. I have also attempted to locate a poem assuming that ‘Lu wei tang’ was part of the poem’s title and not the author, to no avail. Dr. Alvin P. Cohen has suggested a possible title “The Gate Deities of the Hall of Lu Wei,” personal communication, September 27, 1998.
174Qing jia lu 104.
wealth, longevity, or general prosperity. The individuals portrayed in these prints are more civil in nature than militaristic. The following anecdote, from Shi Chengjin's 石成金 (1659-1736) *Xiao de hao* 笑得好, sheds light on this type of print and the popular attitude toward them.

**Posting [a Picture] of a Daoist Priest on the Gate**

When a certain person went to buy a door god [print] he mistakenly bought a print of a Daoist priest and pasted it on his gate. His wife asked, "Door gods normally hold daggers or grasp battleaxes, [thus] ghosts certainly fear them. This [priest] has an honest and kind face. What use will it be if you paste it up?" Her husband replied, "Do not speak like this! Now he has an outward appearance of honesty and kindness, but, if something unfortunate arises, he is capable of extreme ferociousness and viciousness."

The man's wife supports the more traditional door god depiction, believing that if you want to deter evil ghosts, then the door god ought to be powerful and fierce. Her husband, in defense of the print, argues that the Daoist priest has the potential for ferociousness and viciousness if the situation warrants. This popular attitude may have contributed to the origin and acceptance of non-military door gods. Based on the premise of the above anecdote, regardless of a door god's outward appearance, if one is appointed to his position, then the god will carry out his duty of fending off evil spirits.\(^{176}\)

A humorous anecdote involving door gods is recounted by Chu Renhuo 褚人穫.

\(^{175}\) *Xiao de hao* 713-714.
In the anthology Jian hu ji 堅瓠集. The following story, again, provides us with insight into an individual’s attitude toward door gods.

In Praise of Gate Gods

One day Zhu Zhishan 祝枝山 had an audience with a certain Regional Inspector. After they had finished their tea, they chatted cordially as required by protocol and then he departed. The Regional Inspector saw him to the gate. Zhu examined the high quality of workmanship of the gate gods and lavishly praised them.

The Regional Inspector said, “Please sir, your praise is not warranted.”

Zhu said, “In their hands they hold axes, faces looking towards heaven; But they look new and bright for only one year.”

The Regional Inspector politely asked him to continue and [Zhu said], “Malicious ghosts and evil demons are all subdued; How can they tolerate this small homely person leaning against the side of this gate.”

They both roared with laughter and then went on their separate ways.

6.2 Door God Tales in Yuan Mei’s Zi bu yu

Like Li Fang’s Tai ping guang ji and Hong Mai’s Yi jian zhi, Yuan Mei’s 袁枚 (1716-1797) collection of tales, the Zi bu yu 子不語, provides additional accounts of door gods.

The tale “Governor-general Liang Narrates Three Events” reverses the role of the door

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177 There are numerous examples of this kind of door print. For examples of “civil” door god prints depicting heavenly officials and the iconography symbolic of wealth, governmental promotion, and general prosperity see Po 120-123, Wang Shucun, Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu 1: 56, 57, 107, 108, 110, 395-397, 426, 2: 442-445, 465, 689, 690. For an example of the three star gods, Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity (Fu Lu Shou San xing 福祿壽三星) as door gods see Po 124-125. For examples of door prints expressing the desire for the birth of a son see Po 126-129.

178 Jian hu ji (堅瓠) 1.8b

179 Zhu Zhishan is a pen name used by Zhu Yunming 祝允明 (1460-1527).
god — instead of barring entrance into a home, the god of the door barred the exit from the home.

Governor-general Liang Narrates Three Events

[During the Kangxi reign period (1662-1722)] Liang Gouting 梁構亭 Governor-general of the Metropolitan Area said that when he was five years old his maternal grandmother née Yang 楊, because she had no one to care for her, was supported by her daughter's family.

She had contracted a strange disease and was bedridden. The disease caused her to be able to take the satin quilt and rip it to shreds, but, she did not realize the extent of her fingers' strength. From where could this have come?

One day she summoned Grand Dame-consort Liang to whom she said, “Both of my daughter's sons are officials. After [contracting my disease] I have never permitted them to stand at my bedside. Their entire bodies feel as if they are on fire and if they approach me the burning pain increases. Now I am in the presence of certain former aunts and uncles. Although these people have passed away, they still have affection for me. From time to time they will come and talk and laugh with me. As soon as they see the two officials arrive, without exception, they all scale the wall to the top of the house and flee. This causes my heart to be extremely disturbed.”

Grand Dame-consort Liang waved her hand and bade the two noblemen to depart. [After this] the noblemen dared not enter again. From time to time they would spy on [née Yang] through a slit in the window. When

\[179\] Xu zi bu yu 6.9a-b. This is the first event of a three event story.
née Yang realized this, with a creased brow she said, "The two noblemen are such little boys and again have come to create a disturbance. Quickly expel them." After speaking to them like this, Yang for the first time rested peacefully. Shortly thereafter, née Yang, seriously ill, breathed her last breath.

After a very long time, however, she came back to life. She opened her eyes wide and said to Grand Dame-consort Liang, "My soul wanted to depart this place, but your family's god of the stove and god of the gate together blocked the main gate. They said, since I am not a member of the Liang clan, they would not allow me to depart. What can I do!?"

Grand Dame-consort Liang said, "You ought to immediately seek the services of a high-ranking monk to come and recite passages from Buddhist scriptures, and, for your mother's sake, repent your sins. What say you to seeking out this service?"

Yang replied, "It is not as good as urging those two noblemen to come back here and for each one to stand before the two gods and speak. The god's would definitely [accept] their confession of guilt and consent [to let me pass]."

The Grand Dame-consort forthwith commanded the two noblemen to go before the [gods of the] gate and the stove. [They both] completely spoke on [née Yang's] behalf. In a short moment née Yang closed her eyes and died peacefully!

In order for the protagonist née Yang to pass on to the afterworld, the two noblemen
must confess their guilt to both the god of the gate and the stove. This tale shows that the god of the gate is not only responsible for preventing evil spirits from entering the house, but also involves himself in the family matters of those he is charged with protecting. Neé Yang was not a member of the Liang lineage. The god of the stove is traditionally assigned the task of monitoring a family’s behavior and presenting a report to the Jade Thearch. The god of the stove would not allow her spirit to leave the home until the rift between neé Yang and the two boys was settled. The god of the stove, considered the most important of the household gods, might have ordered the god of the gate to bar neé Yang’s exit. This tale not only demonstrates the interaction between mortals and the god of the gate but also the interaction between the god of the gate and other household deities.

An alternate form of the door deity is briefly mentioned in the story “The Rite of Communicating with the Dead”. In this story we find a door guardian protecting one of the gates into the underworld.

The Rite of Communicating with the Dead

Nantang Assistant Prefect Gu Meipo 預梅坡 said that Celestial Master Zhang knew how to perform the rite for communicating with the dead. If there was an untoward situation, he had the ability to send off his yang soul which would go to the grave, summon the [troublesome] ghost, and ask it questions. As for how the ghost could

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180 Xu zi bu yu 7.8b-9a.
181 I have been unable to identify Nantang. It is possible that it is one of the three prefectures -- Hangzhou, Jiaxing, and Huzhou -- established during the Qing dynasty which comprise the Qiantang Circuit. This area comprises some twenty counties in modern day Zhejiang Province.
182 Celestial Master Zhang (Zhang Tianshi 張天師) is the title of the head priest of the Celestial Master Daoist sect created during the Later Han Dynasty. This title was conferred on the descendants of Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (fl. 142 CE), the sect founder.
speak, it would possess a person and speak through his mouth. This person would not be aware that this was happening. Only a stupid person, and no other, could be used [to channel the spirit].

Previously Meipo, himself, observed this [rite] personally. During the time of the fifty-sixth Celestial Master\(^{183}\) there was a certain judicial official who lost fifty taels of silver he was in charge of disbursing. He searched for it but could not find it. Humiliated and remorseful, he hung himself.

After his death, the lost silver still had not been recovered. His superior, then, resorted to using the rite for communicating with the dead. He ordered a certain water bearer to stand on the threshold of the gate. He spit water on him and then pasted more than a hundred paper charms on him until his entire body was almost covered [in charms]. Both his eyes and ears were covered with charms. However, he did not paste [any charms] on top of his head and over his mouth. The water bearer, initially, could still move his body, but finally, he could not move at all. It was as if [his body] were cast in metal.

A short while later he emitted a sound, [saying that] he had arrived at the gates to the underworld. He saw the aforementioned judicial official bearing a roof beam on his shoulder and secured to him with a rope.

Outside the gates of the underworld he stood waiting to deal with [official business]. When the judicial official came face to face with the water bearer he said, “You should return and report to the Celestial Master that, as for the silver, a certain secret catamite placed it underneath the

\(^{183}\) The fifty-sixth Celestial Master was Zhang Yulong 張遇隆 (d. 1771).
floorboards. The Celestial Master should dispatch a person to lift up [the floorboards] and take a look. He will, in fact, find that not one piece of silver is missing.”

[The water bearer said], “May I ask, why do you have a roof beam on your shoulders?”

He then said, “All the spirits of those who hang themselves carry a roof beam on their backs. As for the rope which joins me to it, it is impossible to slip off. It is unbelievably miserable to bear this much weight. If only someone in the world of the living could perform a ritual on my behalf, then I would be able to slip it off. Otherwise, I can never remove it and I will not be able to be reincarnated. I pray for the Celestial Master's mercy and for him to perform this ritual on my behalf. If the Celestial Master promises [to perform the ritual], immediately this will be transmitted to the King of the Underworld who will inform the judicial official of the court of the Celestial Master. Since you all usually consider these matters of little significance, you make trouble for both the dead and the living. Therefore the envoy who has come here will be punished with twenty floggings. This ought to put an end to future incidents completely. If not, you will incur a still stiffer punishment.”

The water bearer then stood very rigid. Suddenly he bent over and exhaled twenty times and then stood up. He stood rigid as before. This entire account of the underworld was related through the water bearer's mouth. The Celestial Master went to question him and took a legal
affidavit. The water bearer listened to the questions and supplied answers.

When the questioning was finished, the water bearer suddenly said, “At first the god of the gate of the court [of the underworld] did not allow me to enter because the one who performed the rite forgot to burn a charm to give the proper order to the god of the gate.” After [speaking, the water bearer] woke up. When the water bearer returned to consciousness, he felt extremely weak. When asked about what occurred in the underworld, he was extremely foggy. However, he reported that when he went into trance, and as more and more charms were pasted on his body, his restraints gradually tightened and he became distressed. He felt an increasing pressure around his ribs. He felt his soul burst out from the top of his head and the pain was unbearable. When it returned, it reentered through the top of his head and his entire body was relaxed and [felt] pleasurable. It was like he had been relieved of a heavy burden, like dropping off to sleep when dead tired. After he woke up [from the trance], his buttocks was black and blue from being flogged. After a long time, the color began to fade.

Henceforth, judicial officials dared not recklessly use the rite of communicating with the dead.

Again, evidence supporting the notion that door guardians do receive offerings is strengthened by this tale. The servant is prevented from carrying out his mission because the appropriate paperwork is not offered to the door guardian. Again, support for the interaction between door guardians and the mortal realm is demonstrated by
this tale.

The following story, "The Immortal Fox of Guangxin," provides further evidence that the god of the gate was offered sacrifices, particularly when something was desired of him. In order for the fox spirit, in the tale, to depart from a room in which he has been imprisoned, a lady offers food and wine to the god of the gate to secure his release. Note that this is the second tale which shows a reversal of missions because the god of the gate is preventing someone from leaving instead of entering.

The Immortal Fox of Guangxin\textsuperscript{184}

When Prefectural Administration Commissioner Xu Zhitings 徐芷亭 first became Prefect of Guangxin 广信 Prefecture,\textsuperscript{185} it happened that the western wing of his house had been locked shut for many years. It was said that a fox lived in there. Lady Xu, however, did not believe this, so she, herself, went to investigate. [Through the door] she heard the sound of someone snoring but when she opened the door no one was there. The sound was coming from near a couch. She picked up a stick and rapped the couch. From out of the air a human voice said, "Lady, do not hit me! I am Wu Zigang 吴子刚. I have lived here for over a hundred years. I have often thought of leaving but every time I attempt to move to another place, the god of the gate bars my way. Lady, could you, on my behalf, offer sacrifices to him. In addition, if you could beg for sympathy on my behalf, then I might be permitted to take a minor position at the imperial court."

The Lady became extremely frightened. She prepared wine and

\textsuperscript{184}Zi bu yu 19.9b.
\textsuperscript{185}The administrative seat of Guangxin Prefecture was located in the area of the administrative seat of modern Shangrao 上饶 County, Jiangxi Province.
delicacies, arranged them before the bamboo couch, at the same time, offering them to the god of the gate. She informed [the god of the gate] the reason why she was making the sacrifice. Then she heard from out of thin air a voice saying, "I am the recipient of milady's grace. I am ashamed of my inability to repay your favor. Please be cautious at a future congratulatory event. In the days to come, Venerable Sir [Xu] will be promoted in office. He will be charged with the new duties on the seventh day of the seventh month, but he should not, by any means, take up his office [on that day]. If officials go to frolic in the Red Plum Garden on that day, I fear there will be evil ghosts haunting the garden." When he finished speaking all was still.

When the date came the Prefectural Administration Commissioner and his elder cousin went through the garden. They caught sight of two boys wearing red clothes sitting in a tree. [The two boys] waved, beckoning to them. They went to take a look at them. Neither boy cast a shadow. However, they heard the sound of something falling. [Looking back] some stones in the rockery had fallen. They were nearly crushed.

In the ninth month, the Honorable Xu was promoted to [Circuit Attendant] of the Gan 南 Circuit. This affair was told to me by Bingjian 鞠, the son of the Honorable Xu.

Another anecdote from Yuan Mei's Zi bu yu briefly mentions the role of the god of the gate. In this tale, a ghost, desiring to enter the house of his wife, is blocked by the god of the gate.

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186 The Gan Southern Circuit was located south of the administrative seat of modern Jiangxi Province.
A Foolish Ghost Falls In Love With A Woman

In the Metropolitan Area there was an old woman who had the ability to see ghosts. She often told people: yesterday, when I was at so-and-so’s home, I saw a ghost. I would say that he is extremely foolish, but his situation is [also] pitiful. He also caused my feelings and disposition to be full of sorrow and touched my heart. The ghost’s name was so-and-so and he dwelled in such-and-such village. Also, [the ghost’s] family was well to do. When he died, he was twenty-seven or twenty-eight.

On the hundredth day after [the ghost’s] death, [the ghost’s] wife invited me to keep her company. I saw him sitting underneath a clove tree in the courtyard. At times he heard the sound of his wife crying. Sometimes he heard the sound of his son crying. Sometimes he heard his elder brother’s wife and his wife insulting and scolding each other. Even though his yang force was bright, he was not able to enter [the house]. However, he definitely listened from outside the window. A sad look came over his face.

Afterwards, the ghost saw a matchmaker arrive at his wife’s house. Stunned and alarmed he stood up. He looked left and right and then he heard that the negotiation did not succeed. Gradually, his expression changed to one of joy.

Not long afterwards, the matchmaker returned. She went back and forth between his elder brother’s wife and his wife’s home. Then she ran

\[^{187}Xu\;zi\;bu\;yu\;5.6b-7a.\]
off, with the ghost following her, as if she had missed something. On the day she [the ghost's widow] was to be presented in marriage, the ghost sat underneath the tree and stared directly at his widow's house. His tears were like rain. From then on, whenever the woman and her mother would come or go, he would follow behind them. His feelings of attachment became even greater.

On the eve before the woman was to be married, the woman tidied the items in her dressing case. She repeatedly paced up and down out under the eaves [of the house]. Sometimes she would lean against a pillar and weep. Sometimes she would bow her head thoughtfully. Gradually [the ghost] heard from within the house the sound of coughing. Then he secretly spied through a crack [in the door]. Restless, all through the night, the old woman sighed heavily and said, "Foolish ghost, how can you be like this? You do not listen!"

The woman's fiancé entered carrying a candle. The ghost hid standing in a recess in the wall. Yet, he eagerly longed to gaze upon the woman. I accompanied them when the woman departed. Looking back, I saw [the ghost] following from afar all the way to the home of the betrothed. [However] the god of the gate stopped him. [The ghost] kowtowed until his forehead touched the ground pitifully begging [to be let in] and thereupon he was permitted to enter. He then stood in a recess in the wall. He witnessed the woman perform [the marriage] ceremony. Frozen in place he felt drunk. The woman entered the room. Gradually he
approached the window and watched. Even after the candle was extinguished and they went to sleep, he still did not leave until the god of the inner court expelled him. Thereupon, helpless and desperate he departed.

The woman left her son in the house. [One day the ghost] heard his son choking his mother until she cried out. [The ghost] hurried and repeatedly encircled the child. Rubbing his hands together, he was powerless. Suddenly [the ghost’s] elder brother’s wife came out and slapped his son. Furthermore, she stomped her foot on his chest and heart. Because of that, he ground his teeth in anger. The old woman saw this and being unable to tolerate it, then made her decision and proceeded to return home.

Surprisingly, the god of the gate allowed the ghost to enter the house. He must have been moved by the ghost’s plight and, feeling sympathy for the ghost, permitted him to enter. If a door god can determine if a ghost is a threat, it is logical that they can determine if a ghost is harmless.

The tale “Mistakenly Imitating Wu Song” directly supports the hypothesis that the original five tutelary household deities mentioned in the Liji were not supplanted by door guardians. This tale suggests that the ritual practice of sacrificing to the gate was possibly being practiced, by at least some individuals, well into the eighteenth century, although this can also be interpreted as a literary anachronism.

Mistakenly Imitating Wu Song

Ma Guanlan 馬觀瀾 of Hangzhou and his family, each season, would

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188 Zi bu yu 7.10a-b. Wu Song is a fictional character from the novel Water Margin (Shui-hu zhuan 水滸傳).
189 Hangzhou is the administrative seat of modern Zhejiang Province.
always offer sacrifices to the [god of] the gate. I asked about this ancient rite, "The gate is one of the five tutelary household deities. Nowadays, this rite has not been performed for a very long time. Why is it that only your family, sir, performs it?"

Ma said, "My family had a slave, Chen Gongzuo 陳公祚, who liked to drink wine. Every evening, he would return, always drunk, and bang on the gate. One day we heard a clamor outside the door and we went to see [what was causing the ruckus]. The slave threw himself to the ground and said, 'When I, your slave, returned, I saw outside the gate a man and a woman. Both were headless, and instead, they carried their heads in their hands.'

The woman cried out, 'I am your elder brother's wife. Since I had truly committed adultery, it was acceptable for my husband to kill me. You were very young so it was not appropriate for you to kill me. When my husband tried to kill me his heart was too soft and his hand would not stop shaking. You, instead, grabbed a knife and killed me. As for this matter, surely it is not one that is appropriate for you to be involved! Each time I have come seeking you, your master's gate god scolded me and forbade [my entrance]. Now, for that reason I wait for you outside the gate.'

Consequently, she cursed and spit in the slave's face. The male ghost threw his head hitting the slave and the slave fell to the ground. Only when they heard human voices did the two ghosts promptly vanish.

All the members of the Ma clan helped [the slave] stand up and brought
him to a bed. He admitted that this event happened when he was a young boy. [He said], 'In those days I read novels and admired the character traits of Wu Song 武松. I never thought I would suffer this calamity.'

Someone told him saying, 'All novels are not factual. Why did you pursue these absurd studies? Moreover, Wu Song killed his elder brother's wife because his elder brother's wife killed his elder brother. If she frequently committed adultery then by royal law she would be flogged and that would be the only judgment. How could you kill your elder brother's wife on behalf of your elder brother?'

He had not yet finished speaking when the slave opened his eyes wide and in a female voice said, 'Justice comes from within the human heart. How about it? What do you think?'

After these questions were asked the slave kowtowed three times and then died. Because of the ghost's words the Ma family very respectfully offer sacrifices to the god of the gate. The family has done this for generations.'

From the first paragraph, we see that the Ma family still performs the sacrifice to the tutelary spirit of the outer gate even when it seems that the practice has fallen out of favor for some time. We also have testimony that the outer gate is an actual spirit because it prevents the two ghosts from entering the Ma family compound and extracting retribution on the family's servant. Also, similarly, the female ghost was eventually allowed to enter the house because the slave, before he died, spoke in a female voice. Perhaps the god of the gate allowed her to enter because she offered the
proper sacrifice or was on a divine mission to extract the appropriate retribution. Offering sacrifices to the physical gate itself is appropriate since the gate is the manifestation of the god. Nevertheless, we have no knowledge whether or not the Ma family actually posted a door god print.

In Chapter III, I discussed the role of Zhong Kui as an exorcistic guardian of the household who, in Ming times, was often paired with the door gods Shen Tu and Yu Lei. It should be noted that there are no references to Zhong Kui in the late tenth century anthology *Tai ping guang ji* and there is only one passing reference to Zhong Kui in the mid-twelfth century collection *Yi jian zhi*. Yet, to further demonstrate his protective role, I have included two tales from the *Zi bu yu* which highlight the role of Zhong Kui as a household guardian. The following tale demonstrates the effectiveness of a particular Zhong Kui print.

A Ghost's Pining

[There once was] a certain Mister Zhang 張 of Yuezhou 岳州. His pen name was Third Grandfather Ghost [Gui Sanye 鬼三爺]. He took [this name] because he was the third generation, and he took Gui because [a ghost] had given birth to him. His father was a Stipend Student at a certain Prefectural School. As for his wife, née Chen 陳, she would mysteriously take on the facial appearance of something strange. [When this happened] she called herself Little Deity Yun Yang 雲陽. [This deity] would, in broad daylight, reveal itself and make contact with her. Although Zhang was in the same bed, he was for some unknown reason unable to get up. It was as

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190 *Zi bu yu* 13.7b-8a.
191 The old administrative seat of Yuezhou was located at the administrative seat of modern day Baling 巴陵 County, Hunan Province.
if his hands and legs were shackled in place. His family had posted
charms and talismans all over the place but they had not the slightest
effect.

Three months [into her pregnancy], née Chen gave birth to a son. In the
air a multitude of ghosts wailed as if they were contending over the best
way to celebrate [the newborn]. They threw down so much paper money
it could not be counted. Zhang became extremely angry. He began to go
to Longhu 龍虎 Mountain to seek out the help of the Celestial Master.¹⁹²

Suddenly, that day, Little Deity came limping back [to née Chen]. Sweat
was pouring off of her like rain. To the wife she said, “I have gotten into a
bit of trouble. Last night I entered your neighbor Mao’s 毛 house and stole
their gold bowl. The family had hung up a picture of Zhong Kui who
drew his sword and chased me. I feared that I would be injured. I had no
alternative but to flee. I tossed the gold bowl into a small pond west of the
alley. I escaped and came here. Quickly go and prepare me some wine to
help calm my nerves.”

The next day the wife reported this to Zhang. Zhang went to the Mao’s
manor to poke around. It turned out that the gold bowl was missing. The
entire household was in an uproar. Just as they were about to inform the
officials [in charge of] catching thieves, Zhang stopped them saying, “I
have a way to help you get back [what you lost]. What will you give me to
[show] your thanks?”

¹⁹²Longhu Mountain is located eighty li southwest of the administrative seat of Guixi 貴溪 County, Jiangxi Province.
The Mao family joyfully said, "If indeed you can retrieve the gold bowl, you may take what you want."

Zhang then feigned chanting incantations. After a very long time, he summoned the members of the Mao clan. They walked down a narrow path to the pond where [Zhang] commanded those that were good at swimming to enter the water and fetch it, and indeed they found the gold bowl. Then the Mao [family] invited Zhang to be their guest of honor. They asked him what he would like as an expression of their gratitude.

Zhang laughed and said, "I am a bookworm. I take no pleasure in wealth. I would like to look through your family’s collection of books and paintings. One or two articles will be sufficient!"

The family brought out their collection of paintings. Zhang chose a scroll of a hibiscus [painted by] Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559). The family felt this was too meager a token of their gratitude. Their hearts were not content. Zhang thereupon pointed to an image of Zhong Kui hanging on the wall and said, "Grant me this painting. Just these two articles. How about it?" The Mao family agreed.

Upon his return, Zhang took the items and hung them up. From then on, Little Deity never again returned. However, [Zhang] heard in the garden, up in a tree, a ghost mourning and crying for three days. The people call this a ghost’s pining, or so they say.

In contrast to the above tale, the next anecdote demonstrates the ineffectiveness of Zhong Kui.
The Ghost with the Hollow Heart

Zhao Baoxian 周豹先 was a native of Hangzhou. His family lived on Dongqing 東青 Lane. Within the main hall of the house, every night, there stood a man. [He wore] a red robe and a black gauze cap. He had long hair and a square face. At his side were two attendants. They were petty and small [and dressed] in coarse shabby blue clothing. They stood awaiting instructions being at [the red-robed one’s] beck and call. From the red-robed man’s chest to his belly it was completely empty as if he were made out of crystal. Even looking through his stomach, one could see straight through at the pictures hanging on the wall of the main hall.

The fourteen year old master of the Zhou family was bedridden on account of an illness. When he saw the one in the black gauze cap he called out to one of his followers, astutely saying, “How are you going to kill me?”

One of the followers said, “Tomorrow when you are going to take Lu Haoting’s 魯浩亭 medicine the two of us are going to alter the dregs left at the bottom of the bowl of medicine. We are going to make you swallow it. This will cause spasms in your lungs and intestines. The next day, when Lu Haoting comes to examine you, your pulse will have stopped.”

The young master of the Zhou family was not willing to take the medicine. He told the family what the ghosts had said. His family bought [a picture] of Zhong Kui and hung it in the main hall. The ghost laughed and said, “This Honorable Zhong is nearsighted. His eyes are heavy with

193 Zi bu yu 5.5b-6a.
sleep. He cannot distinguish between a human and a ghost. How could he fill anyone with fear! Presumably, the one who painted this, had intended this Zhong Kui to seize only minor ghosts and that’s all! Zhong Kui must bear this irritation. This is the reason why his eyes are slightly shut.”

After [the red-robed one] had dwelt there for over a month, the ghost’s [retainers] said [to him], “This family’s spirit and fortune have not yet weakened. Even though you make them suffer, there is no benefit [to you]. You might as well leave.”

The black guaze capped one said, “If I leave empty handed from this family, this will set an example [for other families] in the future. How will I obtain blood or food?”

Twirling his fingers around he said, “Now a full year has past. I demand a certain kind of pig and then I will depart.”

Soon afterwards, a pig that belonged to a servant died and the master [of the Zhou family] recovered from his illness. The Zhou family to this day talks about the ghost with the hollow heart.

This tale shares a similarity with the anecdote “Artisan Hu” from the mid-twelfth century anthology Yi jian zhi. In “Artisan Hu” the gate gods are offended by the artist’s rendition of their images. They fear that they will not receive the appropriate offerings and the people will not respect them. In the above tale, the artist’s rendition of Zhong Kui has affected the deity’s ability to exorcise ghosts. The ghost in the tale proposes that since the artist painted Zhong Kui’s eyes slightly shut, this Zhong Kui was nearsighted, could not distinguish between humans and ghosts, and was only capable
of warding off minor ghosts. This is another example of how an artist’s rendition of a guardian deity directly affects the deity’s ability to perform their duties.

The *Yan jing sui shi ji* 燕京歲時記 (postscript dated April 15, 1900), by Dun Lichen 敦禮臣 (b. 1885) is an account of the seasonal customs of Beijing. Dun’s entry on door gods supports the Ma family’s actions as being appropriate:

Gate gods, (which are brightly printed on sheets of paper and pasted on the gates at New Year’s time as protectors of the house during the coming year), all wear armor and helmet, hold a spear, have a bow suspended, and bear a sword. Some say that they are Shen T’u and Yü Lei, while others say they are Ch’in Ch’iung and (Hu) Ching-te. But in reality these explanations are both false, and it is only correct to say of them that they are gate gods. In fact the gate is the chief of the five household things sacrificed to, and hence is not a heterodox deity. Thus when people of the Capital regard them as gods, but do not sacrifice to them, they have failed to grasp their significance.¹⁹⁴

Dun believes that the door gods do not embody any identifiable individual, mythological or historical. They are merely gate gods. Dun also seems to be implying that the posting of door prints is unnecessary. Offering sacrifices to the physical gate itself should be sufficient since the gate is the manifestation of the deity. Dun also states that because the god of the gate, and as an extension door gods in general, is an orthodox deity the people should offer sacrifices to them. Thus, the Ma family, by continuing to offer sacrifices to the gate, perform the proper ritual protocol. This ritual, though rare in Yuan Mei’s time, the late eighteenth century, seems to have almost

¹⁹⁴Bodde, *Annual Customs* 100.
become non-existent by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Yet, based on another passage from the Yan jing sui shi ji, a variant ritual, in honor of the five tutelary deities, has survived intact up to this period. Dun describes a ritual called Favorable Stars (shun xing 順星) which occurs during the first lunar month:

On the eighth day (in some provinces on the eighteenth), after twilight, one hundred and eight lamps are lighted, made out of paper tapers soaked in oil, while incense is burned and offered. This is called the Shun Xing. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth day, lamps are again lighted and burn brightly, extending from the south-west corner of the main hall to the main gate. This is called “scattering lantern flowers,” or again, “scattering small men,” and is done with the idea of warding off the inauspicious.

According to the Ti-ching Ching-wu-lüeh 帝京景物略, on the thirteenth day of the first month each household would take one hundred and eight small lamp cups, light them at night, and scatter them on the well, the kitchen stove, the gates, the doors, and the stone block on which clothing is beaten while washed, this being called the “scattering of the lamps.”

Based on the above passage, some form of ritual offering to the five tutelary deities has survived into the early twentieth century; but the original impluvium has been replaced by the washing stone and the lane has been supplanted by the well.

Surviving Qing dynasty door god prints are rare. Examples can be found in several of Wang Shucun’s monographs listed in the bibliography. Po Sung-Nien’s monograph, Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems (1992), also contains numerous examples of

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195 The Di jing jing wu lue is a work by Liu Tong 劉侗 (1591-1634) and Yu Yizheng 于奕正 (Ming) describing Beijing.
196 Bodde, Annual Customs 3-4.
modern prints from original Qing dynasty woodblocks and prints from the recutting of Qing dynasty woodblocks. Surviving Qing prints and woodblocks not only contribute to our knowledge of the iconography of door god prints but also influence modern day artists who, in relying on the patterns of these blocks, perpetuate the older, popular styles.

Recutting is the means by which modern printing blocks are carved patterned identically from the original Qing dynasty printing blocks.
CHAPTER VII Conclusion

Door gods continued to flourish even after the end of the Qing dynasty and well into Republican era China (1911-1949). It was during this time that Western scholarship took interest in New Year prints. Many of the studies from this period, carried out by missionaries or early sinologists, produced important collections of Chinese New Year prints (which include door god prints). The collection of the Russian sinologist Vasily M. Alekseev, which covers northern China, is housed in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.\(^{198}\) Anne S. Goodrich's monograph, *Peking Paper Gods* (1991), contains examples of New Year prints collected in Beijing in 1931. Clarence Burton Day's work, *Chinese Peasant Cults: Being a Study of Chinese Paper Gods* (1940), is still today, the best introduction to the subject of religious iconography in New Year prints. The prints in Day's collection, which numbers between five and eight hundred varieties, were collected by the author or were given to him by his students while teaching at Hangzhou University during the 1930s and 1940s. His monograph contains sample door god prints from Beijing, Hong Kong, Zhejiang, Hunan, Shandong, and Jiangsu.\(^{199}\)

The use of door gods during the past seventy years, however, particularly among the major, economically developing urban centers, has been on the decline. Day notes that even as early as the 1930s and 1940s door gods were becoming less popular in the urban areas.\(^{200}\) Day attributes the decline in the use of door gods (and New Year prints in general), in part, to reforms enforced by the Nationalist government. He quotes


\(^{199}\)Day 48, 90, 94.

\(^{200}\)Day 90.
instructions issued by the Zhejiang Provincial Government which list government sanctioned deities that were acceptable to worship and for which temples could be constructed. According to this declaration, door gods fell under the category of "useless" gods and should be "discarded".

Further damage to the New Year print trade occurred during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Nothing, however, could compare to the destruction of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1972). One of the primary goals of the Cultural Revolution was the destruction of the "four olds" -- old customs, old habits, old culture, and old thinking. Its impact on New Year prints was both devastating and irreversible. Rare Ming and Qing dynasty prints and printing blocks were destroyed because they were believed to represent "feudal" beliefs.

Wang Shucun (1923-), the foremost scholar today on Chinese New Year prints and folk art, lived during this turbulent period. He was born in Yangliuqing 楊柳青, a major New Year print center located outside of Tianjin. He began collecting folk prints during his youth. During the Cultural Revolution he hid his collection of prints until political winds shifted and he was able to safely display and further study them. The New Year prints in his collection number in the thousands and his entire collection of folk art includes over ten thousand artifacts. He has written numerous articles and books on the topic, many of which contain rare examples of Ming and Qing dynasty woodblock prints.

Despite rumors that woodblock prints and printing blocks were being destroyed during Deng Xiaoping's 鄧小平 (1904-1997) Spiritual Pollution campaigns of the 1980s, numerous scholars have been reporting on a resurgence in the use of door god prints.

201 Day 190-194.
Julian F. Pas, during a trip through Hubei and Sichuan from January to April 1985, photographed a number of door god prints posted on gates. ²⁰² Many of these were modern machine-printed pictures and were not the traditional woodblock-printed variety. Many of the prints depicted military generals such as Qing Qiong and Yuchi Jingde, Gao Chong and Yang Zaixing (Southern Song), Zhang Xianzhong (1606-1646) and Li Zicheng (1606-1645), Guan Gong (?-220) and Zhang Fei (?-221), and, paired images of Zhong Kui. ²⁰³ He also found door prints which depicted civil officials and one that included characters from the *Journey to the West*. ²⁰⁴ Interestingly, these modern prints observed by Pas, with the exception of Qin Qiong, Yuchi Jingde, and Zhong Kui, do not include any of the paired door gods discussed in Chapter V. Another interesting aspect which Pas points out is that in modern prints of door gods, “... male generals are occasionally replaced by females. The religious connotation of door spirits is being neutralized or eliminated by new themes: either of a Marxist nature or of a more secular symbolism.” ²⁰⁵ He describes one such print as:

This is a perfect sample of the new spirit that has emerged in socialist China. Each side shows three girls and three boys; some are musicians (certainly), others are dancers and singers (probably). In the background are communist symbols and an explosion of firecrackers. I assume that posters like these are purchased by party members and cadres, who are not expected to share in the so-called popular superstitions. This new variety

²⁰³Pas 177-178 (description), 186-194 (prints).
²⁰⁴Pas 178-179 (description) 195 (print); 179 (description) 198 (print), respectively.
²⁰⁵Pas 179.
of “door spirits” is certainly more acceptable from the viewpoint of socialist orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{206}

Jordan Paper also noted the resurgence of door prints during his visits to the People’s Republic of China in 1986 and 1992.\textsuperscript{207}

This thesis is the first detailed study in English of the household door god. It differs from previous studies, in any language, by focussing on the surviving literary evidence in order to investigate the culture of door gods. From the spirits of the inner door and outer gate of the first century BCE to the assured survival of their successors into the twenty-first century, door gods are a resilient deity. They transcend all social boundaries and are popular with all classes of people. According to entries from the \textit{Liji}, (ca. first century BCE) the door is offered sacrifices by the Son of Heaven, the feudal lords, grand masters, servicemen, subofficial functionaries, and the common people. The Tang emperor bestowed paintings of Zhong Kui on his loyal ministers while the people posted Zhong Kui’s image on their gates. During the Song dynasty, peddlers sold door god prints to the populace and shops gave them as gifts to their most valued customers. During the Ming dynasty, officials were awarded stipends to replace the door gods not only during the New Year festival, but also, immediately upon assuming office.

The premise of the thesis contains four major points. First, there is no direct evidence supporting the belief that modern-day door gods evolved directly from the five tutelary household deities of the first century BCE, even though, it seems logical to assume this. It is not as simplistic as saying the early spirits of the inner door and the

\textsuperscript{206}Pas 180 (print 200).
outer gate directly evolved into the modern-day door gods. The history of the development is not that simple. Evidence shows that the door gods of today did not supplant the tutelary spirits of the inner door and the outer gate. There is no evidence that the spirits of the inner door and outer gate were even regarded as being protective in nature. It is even possible that if we accept the claim that the legend of Shen Tu and Yu Lei originally appeared in the *Shan han jing*, which is believed by some scholars to date circa the third century BCE, then they just might predate the tutelary spirit of the inner door and the outer gate.

In fact, sacrifices continued to be offered to the five tutelary household deities at the same time that images of Shen Tu and Yu Lei were placed on the sides of doors. The sixth-century *Jing-chu sui shi ji* records that peachwood boards and peachwood charms were placed on the sides of doors, images of the cock were painted on gates, and reed ropes were hung above the door at the same time that bean congee was being offered to the spirit of the inner door and outer gate. The Qing dynasty story "Mistakenly Imitating Wu Song", included in Yuan Mei's (1716-1797) *Zi bu yu*, in which the Ma clan still sacrifices to the gate is testimony substantiating the continued worship of the original tutelary spirit of the door. Dun Lichen (b. 1885) also advocates this notion because he too proclaims that gate gods are just that, merely gate gods, an orthodox deity, and should be offered sacrifices.

This notion of offering sacrifices to the gate brings up my second point. One of the most interesting facts discovered about door gods is that they did indeed receive sacrifices. Again, based on the sixth-century *Jing-chu sui shi ji*, the people offered bean congee to the spirit of the gate and the door. In the eighth century tale "The Vajra of Po 12, contends that door gods do not receive offerings.
Wu Prefecture” people prayed to the door vajra of the Kaiyuan Monastery and their prayers would always be answered. In return, the people payed homage to the vajra, presumably with offerings. The gate gods in “Artisan Painter Hu” (mid-twelfth century) receive candles and incense. In the Yuan dynasty (1264-1368) drama *The Ghost of the Pot* we learn that the door gods are offered tea and sweetmeats and can be bribed with paper money. Thus, door gods receive all manner of offerings -- bean congee, incense, candles, sweetmeats, tea, gold paper money, wine, and, food. They receive these offerings, sometimes out of respect for the deity, and, occasionally on behalf of a mortal who needs divine assistance. In either case, door gods do receive offerings.

I have also demonstrated that Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde did not supplant the door guardians Shen Tu and Yu Lei. Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde probably did not become door gods until the end of the sixteenth century since there is no evidence to support an earlier date. There is also no evidence to indicate that any other historical or mythological figures, with the exception of Shen Tu and Yu Lei, became or were considered door gods prior to the appearance of the written legend of Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde in 1592 in the *Journey to the West*. Shen Tu and Yu Lei were not supplanted by Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde, but instead coexisted with them and all the other varieties of door prints. In fact, their use as door gods continue today.209

Finally, I propose that only through the combination of literary and artistic evidence will the history and evolution of the deity of the gate be fully understood.

Numerous studies focus on door gods as they appear in woodblock New Year prints,

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209 See Po 110-111 for a modern print of Shen Tu and Yu Lei from Qing dynasty woodblocks. See Wang Shucun, *Zhongguo min jian nian hua shi tu lu* 2:440 for a Qing dynasty print of Shen Tu and Yu Lei from Beijing. I have in my possession a photograph of just their names painted on white paper taken in May 1992 in Guangzhou by Dr. Daniel L. Overmyer. My thanks to him for giving me this picture.
however, many of these studies neglect the literary evidence collected in this study. To truly understand the culture of door gods, future scholars must compare both literary and artistic evidence, which will require a detailed, systematic study of regional variations among door god iconography. Examples of door gods from the major print centers are abundant, however, there are few studies of door gods from minor print centers and among China's minority populations.

Door gods are not merely deities printed on paper and posted to the gate during the New Year celebration. The task of manning their post and preventing evil spirits from entering the house is not their sole duty. Door gods come in many varieties. As deities, they possess personality and emotion. Door gods have been captured or defeated by more powerful adversaries. They not only prevent evil ghosts from entering a house but also have the power to remove those that may already be there or may have slipped by. They are both prophylactic and exorcistic. Yes, ghosts do slip past their watchful eyes. They can be convinced to allow a spirit to pass with a simple pitiful story; they can be bribed with gold paper money; or, a higher-ranking deity can command them to allow a spirit to enter. Door gods not only interact with other deities but also with the mortal realm. All gate guardians cannot and should not be categorized into one all-encompassing generic classification. The evidence I have assembled makes clear that they also do not adhere to a direct and uniform evolutionary development.

"As a spiritual official, a god is said to interact with other spirits, commanding lower-ranked gods and ghosts, and reporting to higher gods. A god can also interact with human civilians and officials, preventing injustice or aiding in administration of the empire (also at times mistakenly perpetuating injustice or bungling administration
of the empire)."\textsuperscript{210} The door god, as a deity, fits this definition and is deserving of more detailed study.

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