THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE TAOIST UNDERWORLD

OF THE HAN AND SIX DYNASTIES PERIODS

by

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Abstract

Throughout the history of Taoism the underworld remained central to its beliefs and practices. In its earliest manifestations, even those predating the emergence of the Taoist tradition itself, it was intrinsically linked to practices related to exorcisms and the Chinese ancestral cult. In this context, it functioned as an abode for the dead and a place to segregate the spirits of the dead from the living, traits later adopted by Taoism. The arrival of Buddhism, however, brought about changes in the Chinese and Taoist underworld. Whereas previously the underworld functioned primarily as a place for segregation, it took on broader connotations, becoming a place also concerned with postmortem punishment.

Scholars, at least until recently, have maintained that the Chinese underworld bore similarities with the Western notions of the underworld, meaning “Hades,” “Sheol,” “Hell,” and “Purgatory,” and consistently interpreted the Chinese underworld according to these paradigms. It is held here that these terms are often misleading, and they thereby distorted the function and nature of the Taoist infernal regions. This thesis, instead of using these Western models, interprets the underworld according to the presence and emphasis of postmortem punishment. This will thereby establish the nature of the Taoist infernal regions as manifest during the periods between the Han and Six Dynasties Periods, a period between the second century BCE and the sixth century CE.

This exploration is based on the translation of relevant texts dating from these periods. In addition, the antecedents of the Taoist underworld, meaning those of China’s indigenous religious matrix and of Buddhism, are examined and interpreted.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... i

Chapter One: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1

I. Introduction and Intent of Thesis ............................................................................................... 1
II. Methodology: “Neutral Death” and “Moral Death” and the Underworld in the Western Tradition- “Hades,” “Tartarus,” “Sheol,” “Hell,” and “Purgatory” ......................................................................................... 10

Chapter Two: Indigenous Beliefs from the Neolithic to the End of the Han .................................... 32

I. Introduction ................................................................................................................................ 32
II. The Beliefs of Neolithic China (ca. 4,000-1,800) and the Yin or Shang (1500?-1050?) ......................... 33
   a.) The Religion of the Neolithic Period ......................................................................................... 34
   b.) The State-Sponsored “Ancestral Cult” of the Yin or Shang ...................................................... 37
III. The Beliefs of the Zhou (1050?-256), the “Spring and Autumn” (721-481) and the “Warring States” Periods (403-221) ......................................................................................................................... 42
   a.) “Ancestor Worship” of the Zhou .............................................................................................. 42
   b.) The “Yellow Springs” .................................................................................................................. 47
   c.) Developments Regarding the Nature of the “Spirits of the Dead” .......................................... 52
   d.) The Emergence of “Demonology” ........................................................................................... 57
IV. Beliefs of the Qin and Han-Towards a “Moral Death” ................................................................ 63
   a.) The Cosmos-Its Structure and Its Responsibilities and the Idea of Paradise ......................... 65
   b.) The Bureaucracy of the Underworld ....................................................................................... 71
   c.) The Condition of the Dead in the Underworld and the Concept of Guilt ................................. 80

Chapter Three: “Moral Death” in Buddhism .................................................................................... 92

I. Introduction ................................................................................................................................ 92
II. The Early History of Buddhism in India and China ..................................................................... 94
   a.) The Inception of Buddhism in India and Early Core Beliefs .................................................... 95
   b.) The Introduction of Buddhism to China .................................................................................... 98
III. Buddhist Cosmology .................................................................................................................. 102
   a.) The Structure of the Buddhist Cosmos ................................................................................... 103
   b.) The Buddhist Underworld ....................................................................................................... 106
   c.) The Condition of the “Wicked Dead” in the Buddhist Underworld .......................................... 113
IV. The Buddhist Underworld in China-The “Solidarity of the Living and the Dead” ......................... 125
   a.) The “Ghost Festival,” the Guijie or Yulanpen and the Sangha .................................................. 127
   b.) The Buddhist Bureaucracy of the Afterlife in Han and Six Dynasties China ......................... 133

Chapter Four: The Taoist Underworld ......................................................................................... 141
I. Introduction .......................................................... 141
II. The Emergence of Taoism ........................................... 143
   a.) From Antiquity to the Han .................................. 145
   b.) Developments in the Qin and Former Han ............... 147
   c.) Taoism in the Eastern Han and Six Dynasties Periods .... 151
III. Taoist Cosmology from the Early Han to the Six Dynasties-The Influence of 
    Huang-Lao Taoism and the General Structure of the Underworld .......... 158
   a.) The Operation of the Early Taoist Cosmos-”Correlative 
       Thinking” and “Resonance” .................................. 160
   b.) A Typology of Taoist Infernal Regions from the Han to Six Dynasties ... 164
IV. The Taoist Bureaucracy of the Afterlife-The Taiping Jing, the “Scripture of 
    Great Peace” ......................................................... 170
   a.) The Importance of Communication and the Structure of the Cosmos in the 
       Taiping Jing ..................................................... 173
   b.) Morality and “Inherited Guilt” in the Taiping Jing .......... 176
   c.) Rewards and Punishments-The Responsibilities of the Underworld ........ 182
V. Appeals and Litigation in the Afterlife-The Shangqing Tradition and 
   the Underworld ...................................................... 189
   a.) The Six Palaces of Fengdu-Attaining Immortality and Processing the 
       Dead ............................................................... 192
   b.) The “Water Bureau”-Human Suffering and the Underworld in Shangqing 
       Taoism ............................................................ 202
VI. The Taoist Underworld as a “Purgatory” .......................... 208
   a.) “Moral Death” and the Condition of the Dead in the Lingbao 
       Underworld ....................................................... 210
   b.) The “Fast of the Yellow Talisman” ............................ 222

Chapter Five: Conclusion ............................................. 234
Bibliography .................................................................. 242
Chapter One: Introduction

I. Introduction and Intent of Thesis:

Perhaps the most neglected area of Western Taoist studies is research into the Taoist notion of the underworld and the idea of postmortem punishment. The Taoist underworld, Diyu 地狱, literally “Earth-Prisons,” has been the subject of only a few studies in the West. If mentioned at all, it is mentioned in passing and not in any detailed or comprehensive study, and often the only research on the topic of the Chinese underworld focused on Buddhist inspired models, leaving Taoist versions relatively untouched. Obviously more research has to be done on this topic.

In general, scholars agree on several traits about the Chinese underworld. For example, many agree that the most influential and commonly accepted vision of the underworld was established during a period between the seventh and ninth centuries of the Common Era, with some even stating that this development occurred as late as the Song Dynasty 宋 (960-1127) (Doré 1911:258ff; Thompson 1989:27; Teiser 1994:1). They also agree that the most prevalent vision of the Chinese underworld is represented by two texts that date to a period after the ninth century. These are the Shiwangjing 十王經, “The Scripture on the Ten Kings,” and the Yuli chaozhuan 玉歷抄傳, often translated as the “Jade Records.” Scholars also agree that these portrayals of the underworld share enough commonalties with the Medieval Western worldview.

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1 I will maintain the standard Pinyin Romanization system throughout this paper as it is becoming more common in use. There are only a few exceptions. The terms Tao, Taoism, and Taoist, originating from the Wade-Giles system, will be used to denote these three concepts instead of the Pinyin. They have been absorbed into the English vocabulary and are more readily recognized.

to warrant the title “Purgatory” and not necessarily “Hell” (Teiser 1994:1). While “Hell” generally implies punishment for eternity, “Purgatory” is a postmortem place or condition where one is purged of their evil-doings through punishment. In the end, this punishment prepares the soul for another state of existence. Not only is this condition similar to the Chinese view, these two texts also concern themselves with the moral betterment of the living, to such an extent that these texts, especially the “Jade Records” are likened to the “hellfire and brimstone” tracts of the West. This means that, in essence, they are concerned with motivating the living to a moral life by inspiring them with the examples of the punishment of the wicked in the afterlife. In sum, scholars believe that these ideas emerged in China based on a combination of Chinese and foreign ideas, specifically Indian Buddhist ones, that slowly entered into China during the first centuries of the Common Era. These ideas, in turn, crystallized sometime during the seventh and ninth centuries and are reflected in the above texts (Teiser 1994:1).

This apparent agreement is somewhat misleading. For example, scholars along with “Purgatory” frequently use the terms “Hades,” “Hell” and others to describe this same vision of the underworld. They use these terms to describe the Chinese underworld often interchangeably and apparently without considering their real implications: Doré (1911) and Werner (1932) used the terms “Purgatory,” “Hell” and “Hades”; Werner also used the term “Tartarus”; Maspero (1981), used “Purgatory”; Eberhard (1967) “Hell”; Goodrich (1981) “Purgatory” and “Hell”; Thompson (1987) “Purgatory,” but frequently referred to the underworld as “Hell”; and lastly,

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3 Doré’s (1911) section on the Chinese underworld is found on pages 250-302. Werner’s section appears under the headings Hades pages 151-154, Mêng P’o 312-313, and Ti Yü 499-500. For Werner’s reference to Tartarus see Werner (1932:313).

Teiser (1994) identified the Chinese specifically Buddhist infernal regions as “Purgatory.” It should be noted that Teiser’s interpretation of the underworld of the period between the seventh and ninth centuries and after is by far the most accepted characterization to date.

By contrast, scholars have largely ignored the Chinese underworld as it existed before the advent of this idea of Purgatory. The only exceptions to this rule concern the work of a handful of scholars. Henri Maspero (1981), for example, called the underworld of the Han Dynasty (西漢 Xi Han or Western or Former Han 202 BCE-9 CE and 東漢 Dong Han or Eastern or Later Han 25-220) and earlier as a type of “Sheol” (or She’ol). Joseph Needham (1974) echoed this opinion by describing the underworld of this stage as “Sheol” and even as “Hades.” These studies, it should be noted, are dated and based mostly on textual evidence. Recent archeological discoveries, such as those mentioned by Loewe (1979, 1982), Seidel (1987a), Harper (1994), Hansen (1995), Poo (1995, 1998) and others provide us with a more detailed picture of the structure and function of the underworld. Specifically, Seidel, Harper, Hansen, and Poo use new archaeological finds, such as “grave quelling texts,” or “funeral contracts” of the Han period to attest to a “bureaucratic” structure of the otherworld that reflects ideas substantially different to the Purgatory of the Song and after. Namely, they are not concerned with urging the living to attain a state of moral betterment, and are, as far as can be established, concerned more with the fate of the deceased in the great hereafter than with motivating the living to a state of moral betterment. As will be established, this bureaucracy is more concerned with protecting the living from possible harm from the dead, a trait that exists to such an extent that these contracts mention nothing of postmortem punishment or even that one is held morally accountable in the

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afterlife. This leads us to value these texts more as evidence attesting to the complex relationships between the living, the dead, and the infernal magistrates who lord over the dead than with punishment in the great hereafter. In this aspect, the early conceptions of the underworld are substantially different from that of the Song and after.⁶

As impressive and revealing as the above investigations are, to date, no comprehensive study on the Taoist infernal regions exists, and only relevant bits of information are scattered about in different studies. By contrast, studies of the Buddhist underworld are more numerous, organized, and systematic, leading most readers to the conclusion that postmortem punishment and the Chinese underworld are an Indian-Buddhist invention.⁷ In the wake of all this, Taoist or Chinese contributions were subsequently pushed to the side.

This brings us to the purpose of this thesis. This thesis intends to address the Taoist perception of the infernal regions. Particular emphasis will be placed on the period before the formation of this concept of Purgatory, meaning the period between the seventh and ninth centuries, and thus will focus specifically on the periods between the Han and the Liu Chao.⁶

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⁶ Definitions of “Hades,” “Tartarus,” “Sheol,” “Hell,” and “Purgatory are discussed in section two of this chapter. For now, I will use the term “Purgatory” to refer to the underworld as it appears after the seventh and ninth centuries in China. Conversely, I will use the terms “Netherworld” and the “Infernal Regions” to refer to the underworld in general. “Infernal” is derived from the Latin inferus meaning underground, subterranean, lower, or situated further down (Hornblower, S. et al eds. Oxford Latin Dictionary, p. 896). “Netherworld,” derived from the Old English, has the same meaning implying low, lower etc. (Kuhn, S.M. et al eds. Middle English Dictionary, Vol. N-O, p. 940ff). As such, they are neutral terms referring to their location only. They do not refer to the nature of existence in the underworld.

⁷ The two most guilty of this are Doré and Werner. In their studies, they imply that the Chinese underworld, Purgatory specifically, is a product of Buddhism and that it was merely moved from India to China. An example of this view is as follows. Doré states that “…Hindu hell was too far from China, so it was resolved to place it in some of the provinces of the country. The Taoist Treatise on the Infernal Regions, Yuh-li-chao-chwan (The Jade Records) solved the problem and fixed the site of these sombre realms is the province of Sze-ch’wan (Sichuan)” (Doré 1911:254). Werner reiterates this idea (Werner 1932:151-152). Furthermore, they do not mention the underworld as it existed before the arrival of Buddhism, and so give little mention of Chinese contributions to the topic. Because these two studies are dated, the recent work of Seidel and Harper will remain more central to this thesis, as they are based on more recent data.
the Six Dynasties (222-589). These periods are chosen for a variety of reasons: first, they witnessed the arrival of Buddhism in China, an event dated to the last centuries of the Han, and its slow and subsequent rise in influence; second, because during this period Taoism emerged as a recognizable religious tradition complete with the genesis of an organized clergy, rituals, and a set of commonly recognized scriptures; and third, because scholars generally regard these developments from these periods as seminal, in that these various ideas eventually coalesced to form the Purgatory of the later centuries.

In general, the function of the underworld during the Han and Six Dynasties period can be characterized in two ways. First, it functioned as a place to manage the spirits of the dead, locking them up to prevent them from bothering the living. In this function, the underworld operated as a subterranean prison staffed by a variety of officials, including Judges, Magistrates, Bailiffs, and Guards to process the dead and manage their interment. In other words, it was a vast “storehouse of the dead” managed by a bureaucracy. In nature, this is a trait indigenous to China, and it predates the arrival of the foreign Buddhist religion by several centuries. Second, the underworld functioned not only for the confinement of the souls of the dead, it also served as a place for post-mortem justice, specifically a subterranean realm for the punishment of the wicked. In this context, it is more of a “Hell” or a “Purgatory” than a simple “storehouse of the dead.” This later trait is most probably due to the introduction of Buddhist ideas such as karma, rebirth, Buddhist morality, and the Buddhist model of the cosmos complete with “Heavens” and “Hells.”

Regardless of its function as a “storehouse of the dead,” or as a place of punishment for the wicked dead, the Chinese underworld was always concerned with “retributive punishment.”
As a “storehouse of the dead,” the underworld doled out retributive punishment in this life and not the next, and, in turn, this punishment was frequently carried out by the sundry “ghosts and spirits” attached to the underworld and under the command of the subterranean offices. Some ghosts, on the other hand, tormented the living without the sanction of these offices. As a place for the post-mortem punishment of the wicked dead, its connection with retributive punishment is obvious: it occurs in the afterlife. This thesis contends that these relatively newer idea of punishing the wicked dead, however, never entirely replaced the former indigenous beliefs of the Chinese. Rather, the two sets of ideas entwined to complement each other, existing side-by-side throughout the centuries.

To express the development of these two functions, I will divide the thesis into three sections, corresponding to three modes of thought prevalent in China before the formation of the idea of a Purgatorial subterranean realm. The first mode of thought deals with ideas predating the arrival of Buddhism and the evolution of a more organized or formal Taoist religion. The second concerns concepts that were introduced along with Buddhism after the first centuries CE. The third and last mode of thought concerns Taoist concepts that developed during the same period. It should be noted that these three divisions are not independent monoliths which function in isolation of each other. Rather, the opposite is in fact true. Specifically during the Common Era, these three complement each other, and as a result, their borders overlap to a great extent. The only real distinctions that should concern us fall between the types of sources used to address the topic: there will be a section on indigenous Chinese beliefs before the arrival of Buddhism, a section on early Buddhist beliefs prevalent in the Chinese Buddhist Canon, and lastly a section on relevant concepts as expressed in the Taoist Canon.
The beliefs of the first mode of thought begin in China’s remote past, specifically in the legendary Xia 夏 (2205?-1500?), the historical Yin 殷 or Shang 商 (1500?-1050?), and Zhou Dynasties 周 (1050?-256). In short, beliefs prevalent during these periods centered on the practices of the ruling households of early China, beliefs that point to a fundamental belief in deities, ancestors and ghosts, all combined within a close interaction between them and the living maintained by an elaborate ritual process similar to what scholars have labeled “ancestor religion” or “ancestor worship.” It should be noted that these beliefs exist, albeit in an altered form, through the following modes of thought, thereby providing a common thread linking them together.

To elaborate, developments during the Qin 秦 (221-207) and Han dynasties enriched this belief in the close interaction between the living and the dead. As a result of political and historical developments during the Zhanguo 戰國 (403-221) or “Warring States” Period, China emerged as an empire under a centralized, some have identified as a “bureaucratized” government, standing in contrast to the previous “feudal” organization of the previous Shang and Zhou. Changes in the structure of the government in the mundane world coincided with changes in the way the cosmos functioned as well, resulting in a more refined vision of the underworld, complete with Law Bureaus, Courts, Magistrates, Bailiffs, Jailers, and others, as reflected in the "grave quelling texts.” In other words, the underworld, too, became a bureaucracy. However, this occurred not only in structure, but also in the way the living dealt with this otherworldly government. This existed to such an extent that rulers, officials, priests, and even the common people petitioned or appealed to these deities much in the same manner one would approach a court. It is at this point in time, this thesis contends, that the real origin of the Taoist underworld
can be found.

The second section concerns the beliefs and influence of Buddhism. Although initially a foreign religion, Buddhism contributed greatly to the development of the idea of Purgatory and the idea of post-mortem punishment. Buddhist elements such as the doctrine of *karma*, rebirth, and a cosmos full of “Paradises” and “Hells” added new life into Chinese perceptions of the afterlife. Thus, the main focus of this section will concern an analysis of the Buddhist concepts absorbed by the Chinese world-view. This will be accomplished by looking at the early history of Chinese Buddhism, its introduction to China and its later influence expressed through Buddhist texts relevant to the topic.

The third section concerns the Taoist view of the infernal regions specifically as found in texts dating to a period between the early Han and Six Dynasties. The sources reveal that the earliest Taoist interpretations of the cosmos possessed a relatively sophisticated view full of fantastic realms often constructed along the lines of the previous bureaucratic model established during the Qin and Han. In this early context, the underworld was not entirely associated with punishment in the afterlife. Instead, the underworld focused more on the management of the dead and the problems associated with them. In contrast though, the idea of a realm for post-mortem retribution became increasingly ingrained in the Taoist world-view as the centuries went on, partially inspired by contributions from Buddhism. Thus, this chapter will look at different versions of the underworld found during this critical point in time to establish the Taoist view of the underworld.

To prove the above points, this thesis will rely extensively on translations of relevant texts, meaning Taoist, Buddhist and others, to portray the development of these concepts. This,
however, creates certain problems. That is, the size and number of sources available complicate the matter. For example, the entire Taoist Canon in its present form contains approximately 1,500 texts. Obviously, an M.A. thesis of 150 or more pages could not adequately deal with all texts related to this topic. To limit the scope of research and translation, this thesis is more of a survey in that it will deal with the topic thematically. Thus, only the most relevant and detailed texts will be chosen. One work, however, deserves specific attention: this is Xiao Dengfu's 蕭登福 Han Wei Liuchao Fo Dao liangjiao zhi Tiantang Diyu shuo 漢魏六朝佛道兩教天堂地獄說, “The Concepts of Heaven and Hell in Buddhism and Taoism from the Eastern Han, Wei and Six Dynasties.” It will be utilized extensively in this thesis as it is an excellent piece of scholarly research. In it, the author catalogues Buddhist and Taoist scripture that focus on the above topic, and for this reason his book will function as a guidebook for locating texts and evaluating their worth. Of particular interest are the tables of Buddhist and Taoist scriptures that refer to the topic of the netherworld. In his section on relevant Taoist Scripture, he lists 80 texts that mention the underworld, and 24 of these date to the period between the Eastern Han and Six Dynasties (Xiao 1989:560-586). Obviously, a piece of scholarly work such as this cannot be overlooked. I cannot give it enough credit.

There are several texts that are central to this thesis. For the period before arrival and entrenchment of Buddhism, this thesis will look at relevant passages from a collection of poetry centered around the work of Quyuan 屈原 (3rd c. BCE), the Chuci 楚辭, the “Songs of the South” or the “Songs of Chu,” and the critical, yet excellent, Lunheng 論衡, the “Doctrines Evaluated” by the rationalist Wang Chong 王充 (27-100?). For the Buddhist case, it will examine several early texts that are influential to the development of the Taoist underworld,

This section discusses the various subterranean realms found in the Western tradition. Thus, it will examine the Western ideas of "Hades," "Tartarus," "Sheol," "Hell," and "Purgatory." These terms or ideas are significant as they are used by scholars such as Doré, Maspero, Needham and others to describe the Chinese underworld. It intends to demonstrate that these terms are inadequate as a means to describe the Chinese or Taoist versions. They are, in fact, misleading. In addition, this section proposes that the framework or methodology proposed by Alan Bernstein (1993) is far more appropriate for placing the Chinese underworld into a functional and convenient framework. His criteria then supersedes "Hades," "Sheol," etc. as descriptive terms. To start, we will place the Western models of the underworld into his framework.

Undoubtedly, one of the most impressive books on the infernal regions of the Western
tradition is the recently published The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds by Allan E. Bernstein (1993). His study traces the development of the Christian Hell and the development of post-mortem punishment within the ancient world, including the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and early Christian world. In essence, it is more of a cross-cultural or comparative study, and, as a result, more emphasis is placed on theme and approach than on excessive detail. To accomplish his analysis, Bernstein established simple and functional definitions to place the formation of the Christian Hell into a conceptual framework. The following sections refer to his work.

To track the development of the ideas of Hell and post-mortem punishment, Bernstein frames the different versions of the underworld within four types, or four types of “deaths,” with each characterized by their emphasis or lack of punishment and how rigorously the souls of the dead are segregated in the afterlife. The four types of death are as follows:

1.) **Neutral death** is simply defined as a state of existence in which the dead, both good and evil alike, exist *en masse*. There, all are neither punished nor rewarded, and morality is somewhat inconsequential. With so little effort spent on judging the dead, the main focus of existence in this state converges on distancing the dead from the living. In this function, it is more of a “storehouse” for the souls of the dead than anything else (Bernstein 1993:3;107).

2.) **Porous death** implies that the borders between the land of the living and the land of the dead are not rigid, instead porous. In this view, the dead cross over into the realm of the living as ghosts or as spirits of ancestors, while the living, too, cross over, making forays into the Netherworld (Bernstein 1993:84;88).

3.) **Useful death** not only implies that the dead cross over into the land of the
living, it also implies that death must serve a purpose. Generally, the death or memory of a culture figure or ancestor must serve a purpose for the community at large, that is, their example could morally improve the community and achieve a more tightly bound society. This can manifest itself in the following: obey the gods, honor the parents, serve the state, among other factors (Bernstein 1993:107-8). As will be seen from an examination of Chinese beliefs, “useful death” could also function as an effective means to explain human suffering, meaning that the dead, ancestors, ghosts or others, could return from the afterlife and haunt the living, thereby causing suffering. Sometimes these afflictions were retributive in nature, in that these various spirits punished the wicked with sickness and other trauma.

4.) “Moral death,” unlike “neutral death,” moves morality to the forefront. It alludes to a belief in a condition where the dead are judged by a standard of known criteria (Bernstein 1993:3). They are then rewarded or punished in the afterlife and are placed in an appropriate realm. This type of belief system operates on two general levels. First, the example of this system of rewards and punishments motivates the living to improve themselves, very much like the Western “hellfire and brimstone” tracts. Suffering in this state of “moral death” thus serves as a glowing or stark reminder of the fruits of one’s deeds: the virtuous dead receive a bounty of rewards in paradise, while the wicked languish in an exaggerated state of torment. Secondly, rewards and punishment in the afterlife explain why the innocent may suffer in this life, and why at the same time the wicked go unpunished, for they will be receive their recompense in the end.

To continue, Bernstein places the “Hades” of ancient Greek mythology in the category of
"neutral death." According to Greek mythology, "Hades" functioned as the destination for the collective dead in the early Greek world. Homer's *Odyssey* (composed ca. mid-eighth century BCE) provides the most detail about "the house of Hades." According to Homer and early Greek mythology, the Earth was conceived as a disk surrounded by a vast body of water, identified as "Oceanus," and across this and to the West, is the gate to Hades where the shades of the dead dwell. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus, the story's hero, was required to cross Oceanus to consult the dead regarding his fate. After crossing Oceanus, he was required to dig a votive pit, named Erebos/Erebus, and offer sacrifice to the dead. Once done, the shades of the dead emerged and assailed the hero, and what follows is perhaps the most detailed description of the shades:

...But when with vows and prayers I (Odysseus) had made supplication to the tribes of the dead, I took the sheep and cut their throats over the pit, and the dark blood flowed. Then there gathered from out of Erebus the ghosts of those that are dead, brides, and unwed youths, and toil-worn old men, and frisking girls with hearts still new to sorrow, and many, too, that had been wounded with bronze-tipped spears, men slain in battle wearing their blood-stained armour. These came thronging in crowds about the pit from every side, with an astounding cry; and pale fear seized me. Then I called to my comrades and told them to skin and burn the sheep that lay there killed with pitiless bronze, and to make prayer to the gods, mighty Hades and dread Persephone (the wife of Hades)” (*Ody* 11:32-44).  

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8 The word "Hades" originates from the Greek meaning the "unseen" or the "invisible one" and is actually the proper name of a Greek deity: the Lord of the underworld in the Olympian pantheon (*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1970:484). In short, "Hades" is the name of a deity and not a place, and the proper title for this region and all contained in it is thus the "house of Hades." Two editions of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* are used in this thesis. The first is dated 1970 and the second 1996. They are abbreviated as the *OCD* and accompanied by the appropriate date. See Bibliography for complete information.

9 Other places, such as the "Island of the Blessed" or the "Elysium Fields," did exist, but these places were reserved specifically for the privileged few, or precisely paragons of virtue (*OCD*, 1996:521). Also, a short description of the Elysium Fields can be found in the *Odyssey* (*Ody* 4.563ff; *OCD* 1996:521).

Odysseus then restored order with threats and his sword, and went on to interview the dead. In these interviews, Homer describes the “tribes of the dead” as a pitiful crowd and as being without intelligence, often “gibbering” like bats (Ody 25:6) and possessing “strengthless heads” (Ody 11:48-49). This condition of stupidity and listlessness is only lost after consuming the blood of sacrifice, and once cognizant, it is revealed that their only concern is the manner in which they died, or how they are remembered by the living.11 Throughout these interviews, the shades of the dead do not mention punishment in the afterlife leading us to surmise that the dead in the “house of Hades” simply exist in a sad and mindless state, in which they are more tragic than fearsome or tormented.

This condition is not entirely typical of the “house of Hades.” Once Odysseus left this area, he journeyed to an area identified only as a place governed by Minos, son of Zeus (Ody 11:568-71). Unlike the chaos near Erebos, Minos lords over the torment of specific mythological or semi-divine figures. In this aspect it is markedly different from the shade collective. Homer mentions only four specific figures who are punished in this area, Orion, Tityos, Tantalus and Sisyphus. The condition of these four is substantially different from that of the collective dead near Erebus, because they personally insulted the Olympian gods and hence received special punishments. As they did not commit crimes against their fellow mortals, they are not entirely

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11 The first point is explained by the description of the soldiers, still wearing their “blood-stained armour,” and of the young girls, described as “frisking girls with hearts still new to sorrow.” Furthermore, the idea of how they are remembered by the living is later reinforced by an interview with Elpenor, a companion of the hero, who, while drunk, fell off a roof and snapped his neck. His body, however, laid unmourned and unburied. In the interview he demanded only to receive a proper burial when Odysseus was able. To Elpenor's only request, the hero agreed (Ody 11:52-80).
"morally wicked."\(^{12}\)

The Pit "Tartarus" is yet another aspect of the Greek underworld of this time. Tartarus, as established in the *Theogony* of Hesiod (composed ca. 700-665), served as a place for the treatment of specific figures in Greek mythology much like the realm under the jurisdiction of Minos. Among other things, the *Theogony* establishes the foundation of the ancient Greek universe and the lineage of the Olympian gods. In it is also a description of Tartarus and its function. In short, it is simply a prison located in the depths of the Earth, a dark and moldering place and

There is a bronze wall beaten around it, and Night (the deity); In triple rows flows around its neck, while above it grows; the roots of earth and unharvested sea.

There the Titans are concealed in the misty gloom; By the will of Zeus who gathers the clouds; In a moulderig place, the vast earth’s limits. There is no way out for them. Poseidon (the god of the Ocean) set doors of bronze in a wall that surrounds it. There Gyges and Kottos and stouthearted Briareos have their homes, the trusted guards of the Storm King Zeus. (*Theogony* 731-740)\(^{13}\)

In short, the sole function of Tartarus is to imprison the personal enemies of the Olympian gods,

\(^{12}\) Orion is punished for attempting to kill all the animals of Crete. For this, he was sentenced to gather all the animals of the Asphodel Plain for the rest of eternity (*Odyssey* 11:572-575). Tityos, punished for his rape of Leto, consort of Zeus, was stretched over 900 feet "where two vultures sat, one on each side, and tore his liver, plunging their beaks into his bowels..." (*Odyssey* 11:577-581). Next, Tantalus, as one of the first mortals, was allowed to accompany the gods at dinner. During these occasions, though, he either blabbed about divine policy, or stole the divine nectar and ambrosia to give to the mortals. In another myth, he even killed his son and fed him to the gods to see if they would notice (*OCD* 1996:1473). For these insults, Tantalus was placed in a river with succulent fruits and olives dangling over his head. But when he bent to drink the water, the river dried up, and when he reached for the fruits, they withered to be carried by the wind (*Odyssey* 11:582-592). Sisyphus, on the other hand, was punished for cheating Hades. In one myth, he asked his wife not to give him proper burial after death. When in the underworld, he complained about his uncared for state and petitioned Hades to let him return to the land of the living to set things right. Once there, he refused to return and lived to an old age (*OCD* 1996:1414). For recompense, Sisyphus was forced to roll a stone up to the top of a hill, and once at the top, the stone rolled downwards requiring a repetition of the task for the rest of eternity (*Odyssey* 11:593-600).

\(^{13}\) Translation from Hesiod, *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. Trans. S. Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993).
specifically rebellious demigods, the Titans. The latter are best known as a group of semi-divine figures who opposed Zeus when he overthrew his father Kronos. At this stage, Tartarus is simply a realm to segregate and punish the personal enemies of the Olympian gods; there is no mention of the punishment of the collective throng of the dead.

However, this portrayal of Tartarus as a place solely dedicated to the punishment of the personal enemies of the Olympian gods did not remain unchanged. For example, Plato (ca. 429-347) placed great emphasis on the idea of the punishing the soul in the afterlife, specifically in the Greek underworld. For Plato and the rest of the Greek world of the time, the ultimate destination of the wicked dead in this world-view was the underworld, and according to Plato’s view, the Earth was pictured as a sphere, riddled by hollow regions through which flowed subterranean rivers of hot or cold water, and streams of fire, mud or lava (Phaedo 111.d-e). All of these rivers circled the Earth and eventually fell into Tartarus, which functioned as the axis for the Earth (Phaedo 112.a-b; 112e-113d). It was believed that after death, the psyche, or soul of the dead, proceeds to a meadow to be judged. From there it continues on to either the “Island of the Blessed” for the good, or the underworld for those that require further processing. Those judged as living a “neutral” life are sent to the River Acheron to be purified, absolved of their sins and rewarded for their good deeds. Those judged “incurable,” on account of the greatness of their sins, are “hurled by their appropriate destiny into Tartarus, from hence they emerge no more” (Phaedo 113d-e). On the other hand, people judged as “curable” are also cast into Tartarus, but only for a year. Every year an underground surge swept through Tartarus, carrying the “curable”

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past the Acherusian Lake and past the souls of those they offended. There, they begged for their forgiveness: if forgiven, they are released to be reincarnated; if not, they are swept back into Tartarus for further punishment (*Phaedo* 113e-114b).

Plato's *Republic* records one particular example of the fate of the dead. The so-called "Myth of Er" tells the story of Er, a soldier wounded in battle and left for dead, who while in this state journeyed to the underworld eventually to return to the land of the living. His account reveals that the fate of the "incurable" was entirely miserable. Every 1,000 years or so, the "incurable" of Tartarus were given an opportunity to have their condition re-evaluated. In the land of the dead Er was charged with the duty of recording everything he saw, including the judgments made of the dead, and their subsequent rewards or punishments. With such a responsibility, he was thus "the messenger to mankind to tell that of the other world..." (*Republic* 10.614d). His account states that...

...it is proper for everyone who suffers a punishment rightly inflicted by another that he should either be improved and benefitted thereby or become a warning to the rest, in order that they may be afraid when they see him suffering what he does and may become better men. Now, those who are benefitted through suffering punishment by gods and men are beings whose evil deeds are curable; nevertheless it is from pain and agony that they derive their benefit both here and in the other world, for it is impossible to be rid of evil otherwise. But those who have been guilty of the most heinous crimes and whose misdeeds are past cure-of these warnings are made, and they are no longer capable themselves of receiving benefit, because they are incurable-but others are benefitted who behold them suffering throughout eternity the greatest and most excruciating and terrifying tortures because of their misdeeds, literally suspended as examples there in the prison house in Hades, a spectacle and a warning to any
evildoers who from time to time arrive (*Gorgias* 525a-d).

In short, these punishments are meant to motivate the living, and the dead in this case, to improve themselves. In substance, Tartarus and the Greek underworld of this time differ substantially from the previous view of the afterlife as expressed in the *Odyssey*, in that it is more “moral” in emphasis than “neutral.”

Similar to changes in the Greek view, the early Judaic concept of the underworld was subject to a similar shift in emphasis. The most relevant example of this tradition is the Judaic idea of “Sheol” or “She’ol.” As described by modern scholars, Sheol was initially “a sad, disturbing place, but one devoid of punishment” (Le Goff 1984:7).

The most substantial illustration of conditions in Sheol is found in the *Book of Job*, a text most likely composed in the sixth or fifth centuries BCE based on an earlier oral tradition. The *Book of Job* records the fate of Job, a virtuous and faithful man, whose faith is tested by Jehovah. So rigorous and thorough were the tests that Job desired to enter Sheol to escape the wrath of Jehovah. All the while he lamented and mourned that the evil are unpunished and the innocent and faithful suffer in this life. He lamented to such an extent that anything other than life on Earth would be better, even existence in Sheol, for

Down there (in Sheol), the wicked bustle no more, there the weary rest. Prisoners,

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15 “Sheol” literally means the “grave,” and is sometimes associated with the Hebrew word for “pit” (*bor* or *shacath*), or even “depths” (*tachtyoth*). In other instances, it is a simple metaphor for death (Bernstein 1993:141-143). In some accounts it is located under the Earth (*Numbers* 16:30), or under mountains (*Jonah* 2:7) or even under the sea (*Job* 26:5). It is only described as a “land of forgetfulness” with only “darkness,” and “dust,” and a place of no return “where dimness and disorder hold sway, and light itself is like dead of night” (*Psalm* 7.16;30.9; *Job* 10.22). Translations of the Bible from H. Wansbrough ed., *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday: 1990).

all left in peace, hear no more the shouts of the oppressor. High and low are there together, and the slave is free of his master. Why give light to those bitter of heart, who longs for death that never comes, and hunt for it more than for buried treasure? They should be glad to see the grave-mound and shout for joy when they reached the tomb (Job 3:17-23).

In later examples of the Bible, Sheol takes on a more ominous aspect in that it became a place to accommodate the enemies of Jehovah and of the people of Israel. The Book of Ezekiel, composed most likely after the Jewish exile of the 596 BCE, points out that Sheol, much like the Tartarus of the Theogony, served as a pit or prison for the enemies of the Jewish people and Jehovah. In the next passage, Jehovah curses the Phoenician city of Tyre for their offenses against Him and the Jewish people. For these offenses, it will be destroyed by flood and cast into the depths of the underworld:

For the Lord Yahweh says this:
When I make you a ruined city (Tyre) like other deserted cities, when I raise the deep against you and the ocean covers you, when I fling you down into the abyss (the “Pit”), with the people of long ago, and put you deep in the underworld (or “Netherworld”), in the ruins of long ago with those who sink into oblivion (the “Pit”), so that you can never come back (or “not be inhabited”) or be restored to the land of the living, I will make you an object of terror; you will not exist. People will look for you but never find you again—declares the Lord Yahweh! (Ezekiel 26:19-21)\footnote{17 Additional notes regarding this passage found in Bernstein (1993:146).}

In other passages, the wicked dead do not lie down beside the virtuous, implying that in the beyond there is more for the good than simply dwelling together with the wicked. Bernstein notes
that passages in *Ezekiel* hint at special areas in the “Pit,” namely areas for the uncircumcised, that is the non-Jewish, and other areas specifically for the different enemies of Israel including Assyria, Elam, Mesecch, and Tubal (*Ezekiel* 32:17-24; Bernstein 1993:163ff). This new division, positioned “in the deepest parts of the abyss,” presumably away from the faithful, it could be argued, is a form of punishment for the wicked in the afterlife. The wicked are determined only in terms of their relationship with the Jewish God, in that only the enemies of Jehovah and Israel are placed in these special areas to receive punishment for defying the Jewish god.

Next, we will briefly examine the Christian concept “Hell.” To start, we must assume that any discussion of the Christian Hell is an intensely difficult topic to address. Even to establish the origin of the term itself is a difficult and lengthy undertaking. According to the etymology of the word, “Hell” implies something hidden under the earth, possibly derived from the Old Icelandic *Hel*, the name of the Icelandic goddess of death and the underworld. Other linguistic cognates point that it is related to the Germanic or Old Frisian *helle*, or *hille*, the Old Saxon *hellja*, the Middle Dutch *helle*, and the Old High German *hella* and the Gothic *halja*. All of these terms are derived from the proto-Germanic *Halja*, meaning “one who covers up or hides something.” By extension, this is applied to mean the underworld and all that is concealed in it. In short, “Hell” implies location, the underworld specifically, and not a condition of existence.  

In the following, we will divide the Christian view of Hell into two general sections. The

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18 Etymology from R.K. Barnhart et al eds. *The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology* (H.W. Wilson, 1988):474. In function, the Christian Hell is diverse and subject to different interpretations. As used in the New Testament, the word encompasses a variety of different synonyms and images that rely heavily on previously established motifs from the Greek, Latin, and Judaic world. “Hades,” “Infernus,” “Sheol,” “Tartarus,” “Gehena/Gehenna,” and the term “Abyss” frequently appear in various texts often within the same text. Their use is conditioned only by the language a text is written in: “Hades,” “Tartarus,” “Abyss” appear in Greek texts, while “Infernus,” “Hades” and others appear in Latin translations. The word “Sheol” too appears in various texts. See Bernstein (1993:281ff).
first concerns a Hell as a realm of punishment for the wicked dead, punishment that occurs after
what is called the "General Resurrection" and the "Last Judgment." In this view, the dead wait
for this event in an inert state. With the arrival of Christ, the dead are resurrected and
subsequently judged.\textsuperscript{19} The second view is different from the previous in that it concerns Hell as
a temporary place of punishment and refinement. In this function, it is a place of purification than
a place for eternal damnation, in that instead of waiting for the "Last Judgment," the dead are
immediately judged, punished, and if they fulfill their terms in the afterlife, are released to
proceed to Paradise. In this view, the ultimate goal is a return to God.

The first function or view of Hell assumes that the souls of all the dead, after existing in
an inert state, are resurrected and judged specifically during the "Last Judgment." After this, the
faithful and good are rewarded and the wicked cast into the underworld. The Christian New
Testament, however, does not record substantial and uniform descriptions of Hell. Most
descriptions are left spread throughout this corpus. So only in the Christian Apocrypha are there
numerous texts that portray Hell in greater and more vivid detail. One such text is the \textit{Apocalypse
of Peter}, a text dated to the early second century CE or even as late as the third century
\textcite{Bernstein 1993:282; Le Goff 1984:35}.\textsuperscript{20}

The \textit{Apocalypse of Peter} records a conversation between Jesus, Peter and the other
disciples. In this conversation, Peter questions Jesus about the coming apocalypse, to which Jesus

\textsuperscript{19} The general idea of the "General Resurrection" and the "Last Judgment" is borrowed from early Judaism. See

\textsuperscript{20} It is viewed by some as perhaps the first major account of post-mortem punishment outside the New Testament
\textcite{Bernstein 1993:282}. After its inception, though, the text remained popular up to the ninth century, even hovering
on the edges of canonical scripture \textcite{Elliot 1993:593-594}. There are two versions of the text used in this section:
the \textit{Ethiopic} and the \textit{Akhim}, abbreviated \textit{Eth.} and \textit{Akh.} Passages not identified by these two terms are shared by both
versions. Translations of these versions can be found in Elliot (1993:593ff).
reveals the fate of all during the “General Resurrection” and “Last Judgment.” The first
descriptions of the dead concern their resurrection, in which the souls are reunited with their
bodies. Once done, “Cataracts of fire shall be let loose; and darkness and obscurity shall come
up and clothe and veil the whole world; and the waters shall be changed and turned into coals of
fire, and all that is in them shall burn, and the sea shall become fire” (Peter 5). Then comes the
Judgment:

Then he (Jesus) shall command them to enter into the river of fire while the works
of every one of them shall stand before them. (Rewards shall be given) to every
man according to his deeds. As for the elect who have done good, they shall come
to see me and not see death by the devouring fire. But the unrighteous, the sinners,
and the hypocrites shall stand in the darkness that shall pass away, and their
chastisement is fire, and the angels bring forward their sins and prepare for them a
place wherein they shall be punished for ever, every one according to his
transgressions (Peter 6).

The damned are then separated and sent to specific areas designed for the different categories of
sinners: there are regions for blasphemers, deniers of righteousness, idolaters, adulterers, and
others. Specific examples include the following: regions where “women, hanged by their hair
over a mire that boiled up; and these were the ones who adorned themselves for adultery” (Peter,
Akh. 24); likewise, there is a region for “the men who were joined with them in the defilement of
adultery and were hanging by their feet, and their head hidden in the mire and said `We did not
believe that we would come to this place’” (Peter, Akh. 24); regions for murderers, who were
cast into a “gorge full of evil, creeping things and smitten by those beasts, writhing in torment”
(Peter, Akh. 25); regions where “other men and women cast themselves down from a high place
and return there and again and again and run and devils drive them. These are the worshipers of
idols, and they drive them up to the top of the height and cast themselves down. And this they do continually” (Peter, Eth. 10); and a place for “women and men gnawing their lips and in torment having heated iron in their eyes. And these were the ones who did blaspheme and speak evil of the way of righteousness.” (Peter, Akh. 28). We could continue, but I think the point is made.

The next view of Hell is substantially different from the above in that it concerns the idea of “ultimate reconciliation” with God. In this view more emphasis is placed on the more compassionate side of God, proposing that instead of suffering for all of eternity, Hell functions as a temporary prison and once the souls of the wicked dead finished their term in this prison, they are deemed purified and worthy to enter into the Kingdom of God. St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), in his City of God, refined and expounded similar and more elaborate views of the afterlife that became influential in Christian doctrine. He proposed that, due to God’s mercy, existence in the underworld was not entirely eternal, and there persons could be potentially purified by fire in this condition. During the interval between the physical death of the body and the “Final” or “Last Judgment,” the souls of the dead suffer a “fire of transitory tribulation, that tests and refines the souls” (City of God, Bk 21.26).21 In the end the “purified souls” ascend to Heaven, while those that are unredeemable, are damned, cast into an “everlasting fire” after the Last Judgment (Bernstein 1993:317-318).

This view of a temporary existence in Hell led to further elaborations on the topic of the afterlife in Christianity. One example of this is Augustine’s discussion of the role of “suffrages,” in which he proposed that the living can influence existence in this state. “Suffrages” here in the

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context of Augustine's teachings imply prayers, masses and alms rendered for the benefit of the dead (Le Goff 1984:79ff). This idea of "suffrages" for the dead lent a lot to a later interpretation of the afterlife, that of "Purgatory," a concept substantially different from the "Hell" of the Apocalypse of Peter.

To start, a study of the origin of the word "Purgatory" reveals a lot about existence in this realm. The Latin root for the term "Purgatory" or "Purgatorium" is purgatio, purgo or purgare, which means "the action of freeing from impurities," and "to purge," "to make clean" or "to purify" (Oxford Latin Dictionary 1982:1522). In short, as its etymology implies, "Purgatory" implies condition and not location, which is unlike the origin of the word "Hell." Also, it distinctly implies a condition that is temporary and not eternal.

According to Jacques Le Goff in his The Birth of Purgatory, the existence of a Purgatory or a Purgatorial-like state relies on, first, the idea that the soul is immortal and is judged after death. Second, it depends also on the ideas of individual responsibility and free will, meaning that one is held accountable for their actions. Lastly, it depends on the concept of receiving aid from the living in the form of suffrage. Le Goff identified this world-view as one that maintained a "solidarity between the living and the dead" (Le Goff 1984:5;11), such as the idea of "suffrages" expressed by Augustine.

The idea of suffrages and the conditions in Purgatory vary tremendously according to interpretation. Most accounts consist of either the living visiting the Purgatorial realm or the

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22 As an element of Christian doctrine, this concept appears, that is formally, relatively late in the history of Christianity. Furthermore, Purgatory is not mentioned in the Bible, and the formation of this idea is based solely on Roman Catholic doctrine developed on ideas established by the Church Fathers, such as Augustine. In addition, it did not exist as an official doctrine until after period 1150-1200 CE, despite the existence of earlier seminal ideas (Le Goff 1984:4;362).
ghosts of the dead visiting the living. The following passage, however, best sums up “Purgatory “ and its relationship with the living. Dated to the eleventh century, the following passage was written by the monk Jotsuald writing on the life of St. Odilo (d. 1049) of the Order of Cluny. It records, among other things, a story of a monk who was returning from Jerusalem by sea. Between Greece and Sicily, his ship was destroyed in a storm. Washed ashore, the monk encountered a hermit who told him the following tale:

I am going to tell you, and I beg you to remember what you are about to hear. Not far from where we are there are places, where by the manifest will of God, a fire spits with the outmost of violence. For a fixed length of time the souls of sinners are purged there in various tortures. A host of demons are responsible for renewing these torments constantly; each day they inflict new pain and make the sufferings more and more intolerable. I have often heard the lamentations of these men, who complain violently (Le Goff 1984:126).

To alleviate this torture the monk was told that upon his return to his monastery he was to alert his fellow monks to say prayers and give alms for the benefit of these souls. He returns, alerts them, and

...the brothers, their hearts running over with joy, gave thanks to God in prayer after prayer, heaping alms upon alms, working tirelessly that the dead might rest in peace. The holy father abbot proposed to all the monasteries that the day after All Saint’s Day, the first day of November, the memory of the faithful should be celebrated everywhere in order to secure the repose of their souls, and that masses, with psalms and alms be celebrated in public and in private (Le Goff 1984:126).23

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23 This passage concerns the inhabitants of “Gehenna.” “Gehenna” is another synonym for Hell originating from the Old Testament. This passage does not specifically refer to Purgatory, but adheres to its spirit.
In short, the above quote points out three relevant characteristics: first, individual souls are held “morally” accountable for their actions; second, punishment in this state is temporary and not entirely eternal; and third, it depends on an active relationship between the living and the dead, through which the dead receive suffrages. This latter trait exists to such an extent that one’s condition in this realm can be influenced by proper ritual performance. There is no mention of aiding the dead in *The Apocalypse of Peter*.

Having established examples of the various representations of the underworld, now comes the task of putting “the house of Hades,” “Tartarus,” “Sheol,” “Hell,” and “Purgatory” into a workable framework. As illustrated by the examples above, defining the Chinese underworld according to these terms is entirely problematic, because each term varies in representation in different traditions and during different times. For these reasons, their use is woefully inadequate. To remedy this situation, Bernstein’s typology of the different types of death is more convenient and functional, in that his characterizations of a “neutral” and “moral” deaths address this problem more succinctly.

As illustrated above, “the house of Hades” and the Tartarus of the *Theogony* are not places of post-mortem punishment, and death there is more “neutral” than “moral.” In the *Odyssey*, the dead are shades, seemingly unintelligent and unaware of their surroundings. Only the condition of their death in the physical world seems to bother them. On the other hand, in the realm of Minos, Tantalus, Sisyphus and others, receive special punishments for their transgressions. It must be noted that these transgressions were not committed against fellow human beings. They instead personally offended the Olympian gods, and for this reason, they are, as Bernstein wrote, “superhuman rebels guilty of insubordination against the divine order,” and
are not at all representative of the collective dead (Bernstein 1993:22). In a similar vein, the Tartarus of the *Theogony* functions as a prison for the enemies of the Greek gods of Olympus. In this view, Tartarus is a prison, deep under the Earth, fashioned to contain the enemies of the supreme deity in Greek mythology, Zeus. For these reasons, the condition of existence in the underworld of ancient Greece is generally morally “neutral” in that the actions of the collective dead do not condition existence in this realm.

According to Bernstein, one other facet is typical of this type of “neutral death.” He proposes that more effort is placed in segregating or banishing the dead from the living than in punishing the wicked dead. Homer records that “the house of Hades” is located far to the West, across Oceanus, so far that Odysseus was possibly the first of the living to visit this place: even the shade of Achilles commented that he was impressed by this endeavor (*Ody* 11.474). In the case of the Tartarus of the *Theogony*, it is a place “As far under earth as the sky is above,” where “A bronze anvil falling down from earth would fall nine days and nights and on the tenth hit Tartarus” (*Theogony* 724;726-730). In such a manner, the lack of proximity lends itself to segregate these spirits or personalities from the living.

This picture of segregation of the dead is somewhat misleading. It is certainly a facet to consider, but is not entirely typical of these visions of the afterlife. One point overlooked above concerns the Greek religious practice of soliciting the dead for aid. So, here we begin to see how “neutral death” can involve the concepts of “porous” and “useful” death. Of particular importance is the Greek religious practice of the “hero cult” and the “ancestor cult,” types of religious beliefs characterized by the ritual maintenance of a relationship with the dead, in which
the living solicit the aid of the dead for propitiation or for aid. In short, it is a reciprocal relationship which is ideally maintained on the terms of the living: one can’t have the dead roaming around unsupervised. Hence, there exists this emphasis on segregation and confinement, supplication and receiving aid from the spirits.

The picture of Tartarus painted by Plato is substantially different from the earlier representations of the Greek underworld. Instead of the previous ritual emphasis of the idea of "neutral death" and the implications of "porous" and "useful death," more weight is put on the merit of one’s individual actions than on the needs of the community. It is true that the "house of Hades" and the belief in a "hero cult" point to a belief in individual actions and merit, but these points are not considered with all the dead. In the case of Plato’s Tartarus, the actions of the individual dead are judged and rewards and punishments are dispensed accordingly, and there is little mention of the efficacy of rituals and the collective good of the community. Rather, individual action and moral betterment are subsequently pushed to the forefront. Furthermore, punishments in Tartarus are also tools to motivate individuals, in that their often gruesome punishments are meant to motivate the living and dead to improve themselves.

Likewise, early representations of the Jewish notion of Sheol point to a similar development of thought. In the initial descriptions of Sheol, the underworld is described as a dreary place, where the collective dead exist without personality and in a sleep-like state. In any event, the wicked dead in this early view are not punished. Also, like the "house of Hades," emphasis is placed on segregating the dead from the living. Not only is Sheol located far from the

24 A description of the Greek “hero cults” and “ancestor cults” is found in Dietrich (1967:33ff). A discussion of "ancestor cult" or "ancestor worship" is found in Chapter Two of this thesis.
realm of the living, the Jewish Bible lists numerous proscriptions against contacting the dead facilitating banishment from the living: *Leviticus* 19.31 and 20.6 forbids consulting mediums, while *Deuteronomy* 18.11 prohibits divination and necromancy. There are also other numerous similar descriptions (Bernstein 1993:137).

Later interpretations of Sheol do begin to hint at punishment in the afterlife as expressed in newer divisions in the “Pit” of Sheol. According to Bernstein, this new dimension of life after death marks the beginning of a new trait in the treatment of the dead in the Jewish world-view. He writes that the segregation of the pit “signifies denial of a honourable burial” and that it “inflicts no punishment but confines those buried there in a place of shame.” There, they are excluded and held up as an example by the rest of the dead (Bernstein 1993:165). This shame is not punishment proper as seen in the later Christian Hell or Purgatory, but in this context segregation in the underworld is the beginning of punishment or “Hell” (Bernstein 1993:167).

The “wicked” in the early Jewish view are not determined by individual action, rather by a community’s collective faith or loyalty. Early Jewish religion is based on adherence to a series of covenants between a people and a deity. In simple terms, it is a contractual relationship, meaning that if the laws of God are obeyed, then the community prospered. If, on the other hand, the community did not obey the laws, it was punished by the direct actions of the Jewish God. The Bible, for example, includes numerous examples of sheer destruction, sometimes by fire, water, plagues, famine, captivity, among others, all instigated by Jehovah. In the end, these views reflect the idea of collective responsibility or “collective discipline” (Bernstein 1993:147). Thus, the morality of the individual dead are not as relevant as that of the community at large. As a result individuals do not necessarily receive special treatment. On the other hand, communities or
nations suffer or are rewarded in this life. Wicked communities, for recompense, are isolated from the faithful and function as an example to others.

The Christian Hell and Purgatory are profoundly “moral” by contrast. In these versions of the underworld, each individual is held responsible for his or her actions. In the end, these individual souls are judged and either rewarded or punished in the afterlife. Similarly, this idea of individual accountability influences different types of punishment, in that the punishment must fit the crime. Thus, women who “adorned themselves for adultery” were “hanged by their hair over a mire that boiled up.” For the men who engaged in adultery with them, they “were hanging by their feet, and their head hidden in the mire.” Furthermore, the examples of the wicked dead in their exaggerated state of torment, like that of the Tartarus of Plato, serve to motivate the living to live a better life.

Together, Hell and Purgatory differ only slightly in function. Hell implies a place in the underworld. In function it generally implies a place of punishment for the morally wicked as does Purgatory. However, early interpretations of Hell do not precisely tell the readers that it is a place of eternal punishment. In fact, it can function with both the eternal and temporary aspects, as illustrated by Augustine.

In contrast, “Purgatory” or “Purgatorium” does precisely imply a temporary place of punishment. There, one suffers only until they have paid for their sins. So, in this aspect it differs from Hell because its function is more precisely spelled out. This temporary aspect of punishment, one could argue, is a result of different types of death. Namely, the ideas reflected in the concepts of a “porous” or “useful death” lent themselves more to the idea of Purgatory, in that the living could actively influence the fate of the dead in the afterlife. In the Hell of the
Apocalypse of Peter there is little emphasis or mention of the dead receiving any benefits from the living, and only the example of interaction between the living and dead exists in the punishments given to the wicked: it is assumed that their example will improve the morality of the living. In Purgatory the opposite is true, in that ritual communication between the living and dead is not only present, it is also encouraged. Here in these last points one can find one the most prominent differences between the two.

In conclusion, this thesis will not try to define the Chinese underworld in terms of "Hades," "Sheol," "Hell," or "Purgatory." As revealed above, the use of these terms is limiting and often misleading. Instead, this thesis will adopt the typology established by Bernstein, with specific emphasis placed on the aspects of "neutral" and "moral death." In addition, it will examine the different concerns of "collective" and "individual morality" and how they influenced representations of the underworld. In the end, the following chapters reveal that the Chinese underworld, specifically the Taoist version, is much more complex and distinct than the previous Western interpretations led us to believe and Bernstein’s models and approach will provide us with the framework for the following chapters.
Chapter Two: Indigenous Beliefs from the Neolithic to the End of the Han

I. Introduction:

This chapter will discuss the general patterns of belief regarding the underworld and the afterlife as established previous to the introduction of Buddhism. To accomplish this task, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first will deal with beliefs common to the Shang or Yin Dynasty, the second with the Zhou dynasties, including the Chun Qiu or “Spring and Autumn” and the Zhanguo or “Warring States” periods. The third examines the beliefs of the Qin and Han.

There are several general traits relevant to this chapter. First, this chapter will examine certain foundational beliefs that manifest themselves in China’s prehistory and appear later in subsequent historical periods. These traits are animism, shamanism, and “ancestor religion” or “ancestor worship.” Second, we will examine the relationship between the mundane and spirit world and how this relationship functioned. Namely, as existence of “Sheol,” “Hell” and other subterranean realms in the Western tradition depend on a specific relationship with a “divine order,” it is only logical that the same holds true for China. As will be revealed, the Chinese consistently viewed human suffering as a result of a direct relationship with the spirit world. In the case of the Shang, Zhou, Qin and Han periods, one did not receive punishment in the afterlife, rather, punishment for wrongdoing was dispensed solely in the mundane world by spirits. Thus idea of the spirits, often the spirits of the dead, punishing the living evokes an element of “useful death,” as these spirits act as agents of retribution. To prevent these misfortunes, the living brokered bargains either directly with the spirits through ritual or through intermediaries such as shamans or mediums. In the end, the examination of the above traits will
reveal that beliefs established during these early periods center more on a mechanistic ritual process than on anything else. Morality is not a determinant factor in the afterlife, and death is hence "neutral."

II. The Beliefs of Neolithic China (ca. 4,000-ca. 1,500) and the Yin or Shang Dynasty (1500?-1050?):

Our knowledge of Neolithic China is determined purely by archeological finds. Currently, there are about 7,000 sites recognized as originating from this period, and it is generally accepted that from the fertile area around the Huanghe 黃河, or Yellow River, numerous cultures flourished with each contributing to the character of Neolithic China. The period itself witnessed a gradual movement from simple hunter-gathering societies to larger, more organized settlements whose sustenance depended more on agriculture. Like the other "hydraulic" cultures of this time, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus River Valley for example, increased food production aided by a proximity to fertile lands led to a greater population, which in turn created the need for greater resource management. Hence, a more stratified society with greater cultural sophistication and more refined traits came into existence.

According to Chinese legend, the Xia dynasty came into existence by the late twenty-third century, but its existence has not been conclusively verified by archeology. By 1,500 BCE, however, the Shang dynasty emerged and it possessed all the trappings of what scholars have identified as a "civilization." This means that the Shang possessed an organized population living within a designated political area. In addition, this culture possessed a highly stratified society complete with slaves, laborers, artisans, warriors, priests and rulers. Writing, too, emerged in China at this time thereby leaving us a broader, but not complete, picture of beliefs of this time.
Given that new archeological discoveries, Shang divinatory devices and bronzes, for example, constantly appear, we must conclude that any study of these periods is "tentative" at best.

a.) The Religion of the Neolithic Period:

As related in the latest studies on the topic, it is generally agreed that animism, shamanism and "ancestor worship" or "ancestor religion" characterize the religious beliefs and practices during the periods of the Neolithic and the Shang.¹ The first, animism, is defined as a religious system characterized in the belief that the world is populated by numerous supernatural beings. In this system, plants, animals and natural phenomena, such as the sun, the moon, rivers, and mountains, among others, are viewed as numinous, and possessing almost human-like qualities and responding in human-like ways. In contrast, shamanism is defined not entirely by a perspective or world-view, rather by a practitioner: the shaman. There are numerous definitions of a shaman. In general though, a shaman is defined as a religious practitioner, who, through an ecstatic trance, is able to cross over into other realms of existence and communicate with these numinous spirits to receive supernatural aid in the form of divine information or help. According to other broader interpretations, the shaman can take on the role of an exorcist or healer, that is a practitioner who banishes or placates spirits that cause illness or misfortune. A shaman can even function as a medium, meaning that he or she is possessed by a spirit instead of actively traveling to the other realms. In any event, the spirits contacted by the shaman are generally the spirits of the natural world, such as those prevalent in animism. In addition, spirits of the ancestors or the

collective dead in general are also contacted. For China of the Neolithic, “spirit-mediums” or “shamans,” often identified as *wu*, were the dominate religious practitioners. Among other things, they summoned rain, purified ritual areas by driving away harmful influences, and called down the gods to receive sacrifices; possibly they, too, could predict the future and heal illness (Overmyer 1995:127).

Of the three general patterns prevalent during these periods, perhaps “ancestor worship” deserves the most attention in this thesis, as it is intimately connected with the destination of the spirits of the dead and the interaction of the living with the dead. By definition, an ancestor is a deified or elevated deceased family member who is ritually re-incorporated into family life. Although personal and familial relationships are prerequisites for the creation of an ancestor, familial relationships alone do not make an ancestor. Rituals are also necessary, as they operate as social conduits and a means to maintain relations with the dead. Given this aspect, it is not surprising that these relationships in many ways mirror relations as they exist in the mundane world to such an extent that, in most instances, the interaction even involved a shared meal as part of the ritual process, as the rationalist Wang Chong of the first century CE writes:

The world believes in sacrifices, imagining that he who sacrifices becomes happy, and he who does not, becomes unhappy. Therefore, when people are taken ill, they first try to learn by divination, what influence is the cause. Having found out this, they prepare sacrifices, and, after these have been performed, their mind feels at ease, and the sickness ceases. With great obstinacy they believe this to be the effect of the sacrifices. They never desist from urging the necessity of making offerings, maintaining that the departed are conscious, and that ghosts and spirits eat and drink like so many guests invited to dinner. When these guests are pleased, they thank the host for his kindness (Forke I: 509).
In addition, the above quote points out other significant aspects of “ancestor worship.” Namely, if the living properly carries out their ritual obligations to the ancestor, if they dutifully perform sacrifice, whether it be in the form of prayer, sacrifice, supplication, or even propitiation, blessings from the deceased are believed secured. If, on the other hand, the descendants fail to properly carry out these rituals, the danger of an ancestor causing misfortune becomes a reality.

Meyer Fortes in *Ancestors*, a collection of studies on ancestor worship, describes this relationship in the following manner:

...failure to perform these duties is believed to anger the ancestors, so that they inflict trouble and misfortune on their delinquent descendants and thus bring them to heel again. To put it the other way round, in ancestor-worshiping societies the troubles and misfortunes that inevitably occur in the course of human life—be they economic loss, career failure, or above all the ultimate and inescapable afflictions of sickness and death—are often attributed to the ancestor. Conscientious ritual service may thus be thought of as a way of keeping the ancestors happy and thus preventing or mitigating their anger (Fortes 1976:11).

Thus on one level, the relationship between the living and the dead is an extension of previous relations: the living care for the dead, while the dead, in exchange for this maintenance, help the living, or at least leave them alone. On this level, it can be strongly argued that this ritual procedure evokes an element of reciprocity resulting from a continuation of respect that survives the death of a loved one. Ancestor worship may even result from a strong desire for control over supernatural or extra-human forces originating from a definite fear of the dead, because, after death, ancestors cannot be left to their own devices. Instead, their energies are routed to attain
positive results through rituals. Without this respect, supplication, and maintenance, they may afflict the living causing harm. In this view ancestors are thus objects of both terror and admiration and the root of all things good and bad.

b.) The State-Sponsored “Ancestral Cult” of the Yin or Shang Dynasty:

In general, the Shang is held up as the first readily identifiable Chinese dynasty. The state of Shang itself was composed of its capital, Yin, near modern-day Anyang 安 阳 of Henan province 河 南, and numerous subordinate tribes or lineages located along the Yellow River. Shang beliefs have been traditionally interpreted according the “Shang oracle bones.” Dated to a period between the mid-second millennium and eleventh century BCE, the “oracle bones” are so-named because the are inscribed divinatory devices fashioned by the means of scapulomancy or plastromancy, meaning the use of the shoulder-blades of oxen or sheep and the use of the breast bone of a turtle or tortoise, respectively. During elaborate ceremonies, questions were carved onto the surface of these bones. The bones were then heated and the resulting cracks interpreted. These divination ceremonies were held daily, and were lavish, in that a good portion of the state’s resources were dedicated to feeding the ancestors. Rituals often involved the sacrifice of numerous oxen, pigs, horses and even humans, not only demonstrating the centrality of the Yin ancestral cults, but also that the dead, like their counterparts in the mundane world, also needed food and slaves to exist in the afterlife. Our picture of Shang beliefs is, however, conditioned by one overriding factor: our evidence is confined to the practices of the Shang aristocracy only, as our only finds, to date, originate from the tombs of Shang kings or aristocrats, and, as a result, the beliefs of the common people are missing.
The questions and answers on the bones reveal that the Shang aristocracy believed in an extensive pantheon with some deities directly linked to the ancestral lineage of the Yin court, others originating from animistic beliefs, and some from pantheons of vassal states incorporated into the Shang world. According to the most recent research on the topic of Yin beliefs, there are three general types of spirits: the first, Shangdi 上帝, the “Lord on High,” the so-called “high god” of the Shang; second, the Xian Wang 先王, the “Former Kings”; and the supernatural beings called the Xian Gong 先公, the “Former Lords” (Ito and Takashima 1996:4ff). In the world of the Shang, these deities were responsible for every aspect of the daily life, even control of the wind and rain, granting an abundant harvest, conferring the favor of Heaven, approval of human affairs, and sending down disaster or curses, among other things (Ito and Takashima 1996:5ff). In addition, Shang royal ancestors directly influenced the health of the ruler to such an extent that toothaches, headaches, bloated abdomens, and leg pains were frequently viewed as a result from the same cause, or symptoms, the “curse of the ancestor” (Unschuld 1985:19). The Shang response to this dilemma is through what Unschuld describes as “ancestral medicine,” or more specifically “placating the dead,” through the same Shang ritual mechanism used to secure a good harvest. To reiterate, this is a relationship typical of the definition of “ancestor worship” as established by Fortes and mentioned by Wang Chong. In sum, the deities or spirits of the

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2 Keightley breaks the pantheon down into five types of deities: 1.) Di; 2.) Nature Powers; 3.) the Former Lords; 4.) pre-dynastic ancestors; and 5.) dynastic ancestors (Keightley 1995:132). A summary of the various types of deities is as follows. The nature of the first, Shangdi, is entirely problematic. Shangdi may refer to one particular ancestor, perhaps the possible progenitor of the Yin lineage, or it may refer to a collective body of the ancestors. It may refer to a single force of nature, perhaps even Nature itself (Eno 1995:45). The “Former Kings,” on the other hand, are most likely ancestors of the Yin lineage, and once actual persons. The “Former Lords,” Ito proposes, are numerous divine beings that do not specifically belong to the Yin lineage, and are closer to nature divinities than to “flesh-and-blood ancestors.” They may even be the tutelary deities of subordinate states incorporated into the Shang pantheon (Ito and Takashima 1996:9, 74).
ancestors are held responsible for or are consulted about the minutiae of the day-to-day affairs of
the court, no matter how big or small. To solve these dilemmas, the living responded by trying to
secure their good favor by maintaining their existence in the afterlife.

Next, the topic of Shang cosmology and the abodes for the dead, meaning the function
and structure of the Heavenly and Earthly Realms, is a very difficult topic to approach and is
subject to different interpretations. To start, the Shang belief of the close interaction between the
living and the dead may have eliminated the need for dividing the cosmos into different realms.
Poo Mu-chou writes that the Shang may have perceived the sacred and human realms as
"conterminous with the human realm" or even a "continuous extension of it" (Poo 1998:27). In
turn, this tendency may have contributed to perhaps our biggest liability in understanding the
Shang cosmos. In short, there is not one specific text that spells out precisely what the Shang
believed and how they perceived the cosmos. In other words, there is no Chinese equivalent to
the Egyptian Book of the Dead (New Kingdom 1580-1090) to provide us with a map of the
cosmos. We have only ritual implements, the oracle bones, and grave goods, to reconstruct the
Shang cosmos.

Of these reconstructions though, there are two predominate theories, one in which the
spirits, specifically those of the Yin household, ascend to a Heavenly Realm, and the second that
states that the spirits of the dead may also exist near the grave. First, Ito proposes that the Yin
identified the spirits of the ruling elite with the sun and were not thought of inhabiting an
They may have even lived in Heaven perhaps in central constellations and in the vicinity
Shangdi; from there they "sent down curses" (Pas 1997:300). According to another
interpretation, the dead may have also existed in an incorporeal state, like disembodied ghosts, near the grave or ancestral hall, and there they depended on grave goods for sustenance. Several scholars record that mortuary remains, such as ritual bronzes, bronze chariots, cowry shells (the precursor to money), and ample supplies of food, wealth, personal possessions and the remains of sacrificed servants point to the “assurance of a comfortable afterlife” and one patterned after life in the mundane world (Pas 1997:300-301; Chang 1985:110). Some scholars have proposed that the inclusion of grave goods may imply that the Shang may have believed in an early bi-partite notion of the spirit, meaning one that ascended to Heaven and one that lingered near the grave after death (Pas 1997: 301). But, given the paucity of the sources, this view is tentative only.

Even though the inclusion of grave goods may imply a post-mortem existence near the grave, it does not provide definite proof for a post-mortem subterranean realm. The sources reveal that the Earth was not directly linked to the idea of an early “storehouse of the dead.” Scholars propose that worship of “Earth,” precisely the nature divinity Tu ± denotes territory and the fertility of the soil. According to Ito, if the character Tu appears by itself in the oracle bones, it denotes the territory in and around the Yin capital. If used in conjunction with other graphs, such as those of the cardinal directions, it denotes other localities, and is most likely a deity of an alien tribe incorporated into the Shang realm (Ito and Takashima 1996:74,86). In this role, it functioned as a “protector god” of the Yin capital or of a princely domain and its inhabitants (Maspero 1981:5). On the other hand, Ito mentions that, as a nature divinity, Tu has been identified with the later “Divinity of the Soil,” or She 社, which implies soil, land, or the “deified earth that produces crops” (Ito and Takashima 1996:70,73; Maspero 1981:5). In other words, Tu, “Soil” or “Earth,” at this time did not function as nor did it imply a subterranean
realm for the dead. This occurs later as *Tu* appears later as an important concept linked to the underworld and figures prominently in later elaborations of the topic.

Missing throughout these sources is mention of the fate of the common or collective dead of the non-elite. Poo writes that the common people of this time may have believed in an afterlife, but one that relied on the practices of the royal cults (Poo 1998:63). In more specific terms, if the common people desired a place in the Shang afterlife, then they would have to follow their masters through the medium of human sacrifice in the Shang funerary cults, serving as servants and slaves, accompanying and serving their masters in death. Given that the Shang society was a hierarchical one, rigidly divided between “Lord,” the “patrician families” of the aristocracy, the “plebeian families,” and “slaves” (Maspero 1981:4), the various levels of society assumed the same positions in death as in life, meaning that the “ruled” followed the “ruler” in death and served him much as they did in this life.

In sum though, existence in the afterlife for the Shang was solely influenced by mechanistic ritual performance and not one’s morality or immorality. Poo writes that ritual performance typified the relationship between the living and the dead and can be summed up by the phrase *do ut des* or “I give so that you give” (Poo 1995:47; Poo 1998:28). This means that, on the one hand, the relationship between these two realms is organized according to reciprocal response, or an action of sacrifice requiring the granting of blessings from the divine. *Do ut des* is hence the only moral criteria for the Shang. This left only rituals, for example the provision of food and other sacrificial goods, and the sacrifice of servants and slaves, to determine the condition of the dead in the afterlife.
III. Beliefs of the Zhou (1050?-256), “Spring and Autumn” (722-481), and “Warring States” Periods (403-221):

The period between the fall of the Shang and the establishment of the Qin Empire in 221 BCE witnessed immense political changes. For instance, the fall of the Yin marked the beginning of the increased decentralization of the political and religious monopoly of the rulers of China, a decentralization that was given more momentum in 771 BCE when the Zhou had to move their capital after barbarians, in alliance with Chinese principalities, destroyed the capital. As a result, numerous states and newer aristocratic lineages arose and consequently competed for power, hence the “Warring States Period,” a particularly fertile period that witnessed numerous developments in religious thought and practice. For example, the sources record for the first time a specific subterranean realm for the dead, the Huang Quan 黄泉 or “Yellow Springs,” an even more refined model of the spirit, and the emergence of “demonology” as a means to explain and to deal with disaster and human suffering in general. In simple terms, “demonology” implies that human suffering is caused by random forces or personalities, or “demons” and not just ancestors. As noted, ancestors are deified deceased family members and so demons are distinguished from ancestors in that they do not possess any familial links to whom they afflict. They are hence impersonal forces, but like ancestors, demons shared a relationship with human suffering and the structure of the cosmos, as later they were governed by the gods of the Heavens and underworld and functioned sometimes with sanctioned violence against the living.

a.) “Ancestor Worship” of the Zhou:

To start, existence in the afterlife mirrored that of Zhou society, in that during the Zhou a hierarchy existed in the afterlife based on a segregation according to one’s rank. The early study
of H. Maspero hinted at this aspect by stating the following: after death the Kings and Princes ascended to dwell with Shangdi; the spirits of the Great Lords managed an existence for themselves in the funerary temple or near the grave; and the commonalty of men went to the Earth (Maspero 1981:26). Modern day scholars generally reiterate these ideas: Poo for example states that it was believed that the ruling household after death followed the “former kings,” and ascended to dwell on the “left and right of Shangdi” (Poo 1995:92). Poo however cites recent archaeological finds that portray a different picture. Using an Eastern Zhou Bronze vessel dated to 560 BCE as evidence, nobles after death entered *dixia* 地下 or “Under-the-Earth” to serve their masters (Poo 1995:92; Poo 1998:65). This passage illuminates several points about the afterlife at this time. First, it shows that status influenced one’s responsibilities not only in this life but in the next as well. Second, shows that the beliefs regarding the ultimate destination of the dead was almost as undefined as those of the Shang, unless, of course, this last passage implies a belief in a bipartite division of the spirit, an aspect not mentioned above. In short, due to the poverty of precise sources and the presence of conflicting evidence, we will never fully understand the nature of the afterlife at this time. Regardless, we are certain that the condition of spirits of the ruling elite was substantially better than that of the lower aristocracy and the common people. This arises from the fact that they could better maintain their ancestors in the afterlife due to their privileged position in society and their access to more extravagant forms of sacrifice in this world.

The literary sources and archeological finds dating to the Zhou finds point to a society rigidly divided along class lines and one maintained by rituals. In this system it is evident that every level of society, the ruler, the lower aristocracy, and the common people, played specific
delineated roles, and this division of labor extended into the religious ritual arena as well, in that each level had precise ritual obligations to perform. Similarly, this ritually maintained world-order influenced the practices of the ancestral cults as well. For example, the *Chunqiu jing* 春秋經, the “Classic of the Spring and Autumn Period” records similar restrictions placed on the social-political hierarchy of the Zhou regarding ritual practice and the worship of ancestors. According to this text, each level of the ruling elite was restricted to the number of ancestral temples they could maintain: the “Son of Heaven,” or King possessed seven ancestral temples; the “feudal lords” had five; the “Grand Masters” three; and the “servicemen” had two. According to the practice of the day, ancestral temples contained the *zhu* 主, the inscribed ancestral tablets of specific ancestors, and it was believed that the spirit of the ancestors dwelled in these tablets to be sustained by the offerings of their descendants. Each temple though was solely dedicated to only one ancestor and its tablet. The other ancestral tablets, although remaining in the temple, were moved to the background. As each rank was allowed to focus on only a specific number of temples, those nobles of lower ranks were restricted in the number of ancestors they could maintain and how they could maintain them.

A similar tendency is also present in recent archeological finds. During the early Zhou, in particular, burial practices indicate a continuation of Shang trends. For the aristocratic elements of Zhou society, actual chariots, weapons, and ritual utensils, meaning the personal possessions

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1 The dating of these texts is problematic. Although attributed to Confucius, the *Chunqiu* came together in its present form by as late as the Han. However, they perhaps are based on an earlier oral tradition and record events from as late as the eighth century.

and the tools appropriate to their position, made up the bulk of grave-goods (Falkenstein 1994:4).

For the aristocracy, human sacrifice to accompany the dead continued in practice at least on limited level until the fourth century BCE. In general, grave goods and burial practices were defined according to the status of the deceased, meaning that one's rank dictated the number of coffins and caskets and the numbers and sets of bronze vessels included in the tombs (Poo 1998:166). So, while the aristocrats included valuable possessions with the deceased, the tombs belonging to nobles of lesser rank, on the other hand, frequently included grave goods of lesser quality. Hence, their ability to maintain the dead was restricted by sumptuary rules, similar in essence to the limits on the number of ancestral temples the various levels of the aristocracy could maintain. To counter these limits, the feudal lords included less expensive surrogate items, the mingqi or “spirit utensils,” meaning grave goods, weapons, ritual utensils, made of inferior materials and in miniature (Falkenstein 1994:5). The inclusion of the mingqi may point to the economic concerns of the lower elite: given that the lower aristocracy’s access to resources was limited in comparison to their superiors, to include these grave-goods of lesser quality more or less fulfilled the same requirements for looking after the dead, but in a more economical manner.

Throughout this, what is truly conspicuous by its absence is mention of the beliefs and practices of the common people. Poo, however, proposes that while the religion of the court focused on practices to benefit the state, meaning effecting authority and maintaining orderliness for the state and its subjects, the religion of the people concentrated on the personal welfare of its

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5 Human sacrifice in connection with burial practices continued in the Zhou period, especially in the Western state of Qin. It was officially forbidden in 384 BCE (Cambridge History of China, vol.1:32).
worshiper (Poo 1998:13). In other words, the religion of the common people centered on agricultural and life cycles, daily decision making, and birth, marriages, sickness, death, and ideas concerning the dead and the afterlife. Also, it is probable that the commoners practiced ancestor worship, but in a way different from the practices of the elite, and it was up to the elite to instruct proper religious practices to the common people and to check for religious practices that may run contrary to the established practice of the state cult. For example, the *Liji*, the “Book of Rites” a text composed in the Former Han (206 BCE-6 CE), but most likely on ideas that existed earlier, records that “ordinary officers and ordinary people have no ancestral temples, [and] their dead were left in a ghostly state.” This passage thus outlines two general traits about beliefs during this period. It demonstrates that the practices of the commoners lacked proper ritual discourse in dealing with the dead, and that the dead of the commoners existed as disembodied spirits near the grave where they were propitiated by sacrifice.

The beliefs of the Zhou and Warring States regarding the afterlife reflect a need to maintain identity and status in the afterlife, pointing to a desire to maintain segregation in the afterlife. Being a class conscious and aristocratic society, it is conceivable that these restrictions were a means for the elite to maintain their own status in this life and the next. In other words, these restrictions, meaning the sumptuary rules for the various levels of society, reflected a need to establish order in the chaos of the Warring States period and resulted from “sound socio-political reasons” (Falkenstein 1994:5). Despite the fact that we do not know the precise structure

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6 For a discussion of these tendencies, see Overmyer (1989-90).
of the afterlife, we are certain that the condition of the spirits of the ruling elite was considerably better than that of the lesser aristocracy and the collective throng of the dead of the common people. Similar to the perception the condition of death mirroring that of the living, the dead had to eat and drink as well. But given the position and their monopoly of power and ritual, the Kings and Princes received all the prerequisites for a truly comfortable existence in the afterlife: food, wine, chariots, weapons and servants were sent to maintain their existence in the great hereafter. Conversely, the lesser nobles and the commoners, with limited access to ritual procedure, possessed fewer options. Presumably lacking the economic resources to compete with the rulers in the afterlife, they resorted to the mingqi or “spirit utensils” because they were required to do so, and because these devices were less expensive and served the same function anyway. The common people, on the other hand, could not or did not properly practice “ancestor worship.” Hence, we can surmise that the spirits of the lower classes perhaps lived in a disembodied state like ghosts or shades as mentioned in the Liji.

b.) The “Yellow Springs”:

In addition to developments in the ancestral cults, the Spring and Autumn Period witnessed the development of a newer and more substantial element of the afterlife, that of the Huang Quan or the “Yellow Springs.” To start, the earliest literary reference to the Yellow Springs occurs in the Zuo Zhuan 左傳 in the story “Duke Yinzhuang Digs a Tunnel in the Earth to see his Mother.” Although the story records events from the year 722 BCE, scholars are not entirely certain if the notion of the Yellow Springs dates to the eighth century BCE, as it is generally assumed that the text itself was compiled in the late Zhou perhaps by as late as the third
century BCE. One dateable source, Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 340-245 BCE), makes reference to the Yellow Springs, thereby dating it to the fourth century BCE. The first non-literary or datable archeological reference to the Yellow Springs dates to the Late Warring States Period (Li 1985:10). The text, unnamed, is a Chu silk manuscript from Changsha 长沙 of Hunan province 湖南. The text concerns itself with the cosmological and mythological matrix of the Southern State of Chu 楚. It does not however directly speak of the Yellow Springs as an abode for the dead, nor do any of researchers provide a precise date for this text. Again, dating the appearance of this concept is entirely problematic, as is the origin of its name: it may refer to the mythical origin of random springs that appeared on the surface, or it may be connected to the water found at the bottom of tombs when preparing the grave. Allan, however, suggests that the Yellow Springs is related to two trees attached to Chinese cosmology, that is the Fu Sang 扶桑 in the East and the Ruo Tree, the Ruo Mu 若木, trees associated with the rising and setting of the Sun. These two trees are, in turn, connected with the Ruo River or Ruo Shui 若水, a possible synonym for the Yellow Springs, which, in her own words, “ran everywhere beneath the earth.” (Allan 1981:29).

The story from the Zuo Zhuan is summarized in the following. Due to his mother's

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9 Although he refers to the Yellow Springs, he does not substantially describe it, and so his information is of little value. Xunzi states “Though the earthworm has neither the advantage of claws and teeth nor the strength of muscles and bones, it can eat dust and dirt above the ground and drink from the Yellow Springs below because its mind is fixed on a constant end” (Xunzi 1:1.6; Knoblock trans. (1988:139)).

10 For discussions on this manuscript, see Barnard (1973), and Li (1985). Barnard though translates the characters as Huang Yuan 黄渊, while Li translates these two characters as Huang Quan.

11 When researching this topic, Maspero, Needham, Loewe, and others either summarize the story or mentioned it in passing only. They never included a translation. Inclusion of the above translation, I hope, will alleviate the same frustration I experienced when trying to understand the Yellow Springs in this context.
betrayal of plotting to open the capital gates to a rival force, Duke Yinzhuang confined his mother to the capital and took a vow, “Not until we reach the Yellow Springs shall we meet again!” Later, he regretted this vow and when receiving a visit from a border guard, the guard put aside part of his meal. When the Duke asked him the meaning of this, the guard replied:

“Your servant has a mother who shares whatever food he eats, but she has never tasted your lordship’s broth. I beg permission to take her some.” “You have a mother to take things to. Alas, I alone have none!” said the duke. “May I venture to ask the meaning of that?” said Ying K’ao-shu. The duke explained why he had made the remark and confessed he regretted the vow. “Why should your lordship worry?” said the other. “If you dig into the earth until you reach the springs and fashion a tunnel where the two of you can meet, then who can say that you have not kept your vow?”

The duke then did as he suggested. As he entered the tunnel he intoned this verse:

‘Within this great tunnel,
genial, genial is my joy!’

When lady Chiang emerged from the tunnel she intoned this verse:

‘Outside the great tunnel
far-flung, far-flung is my joy!’

So in the end mother and son became as they had been before.

(Watson 1989:3-4).

Though the above text is sparse in detail, later sources, particularly those from the Han, tell us more about the condition of the dead in the underworld, in particular the Yellow Springs. In particular, the *Hanshu* 漢書 or “History of the Han Dynasty” by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE) makes two references to the underworld and existence there. One passage refers to *Dixia* or
“Under-the-Earth,” a synonym for the underworld. The story is as follows. While discussing the problems of succession after the death of Emperor Huidi (ca. 187 BCE) one lord chides another that if he did not carry out certain tasks “How could you face Gaodi (a previous Emperor) in Dixia?” 何面目見高帝於地下 (Hanshu 40.2047). Another passage also uses similar language to describe one lord meeting his master in the underworld. Also, Han poetry makes specific reference to existence in this realm. A poem from the Gushi shijiu shouji 古詩十九首集, “A Collection of Nineteen Ancient Poems,” describes existence there in the following manner:

I guide my carriage from the Upper East Gate,
and look in the distance to the tombs in the far North.
How the white poplars rustle!
Pines and Cypresses line the broad road.
Below holds the ancient dead,
Who silently endure the “Long Evening,”
and are concealed sleeping below in the Yellow Springs,
for a thousand years, never to awake.

Yin and yang move infinitely,
(yet) one’s destined years (last as long) as morning dew.
One’s life is brief, like a temporary lodging,
and our lifespan is not as firm as that of gold or stone.
Tens of thousands of years come and go,
(yet) the Sagely and the Worthy cannot surpass this.
(Some) ingest concoctions in the search of holy immortality,

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12 The second reference is found in Hanshu 68.2938. Both references supplied by Loewe (1982:34;193).
but often it is this medicine that causes harm.
Why not drink fair wine and wear soft light silk?\textsuperscript{13}

In this context it seems that, like the passage in the \textit{Zuo Zhuan}, the Yellow Springs resembles the early "Sheol" of Job. In short, the Yellow Springs is a vaguely defined subterranean region and a storehouse for the dead. If we consider the passages from the \textit{Hanshu}, existence there implies that rank and station still applied as it did in life and perhaps the dead still maintained the same responsibilities there as when alive. In contrast, the poem implies that the dead maintain a "corporate existence" without distinct identity. There in the Yellow Springs, the dead "silently endure the 'Long Evening,' (the Changmu 長暮, a metaphor for death), and are concealed sleeping below in the Yellow Springs, for a thousand years, never to awake," implying that the dead do not maintain an independent existence. They are rather a "collective throng of the dead" without thought and personality, standing in contrast to the previous quotes from the \textit{Hanshu}. It is interesting to note that the Yellow Springs of Han poetry is closer in function to the early "Sheol." Namely, according to Bernstein, Sheol has no physical attributes, except that it is represented as being part of the innards of the earth, downward beneath the Earth, and functioning at times as a synonym for death (Bernstein 1993:140). If the Han references represent a line of continuity with beliefs in the later Warring States period, then, in these aspects, the Yellow Springs appears indeed closer to "Sheol" in that early accounts merely locate it under the Earth, and there the dead also sleep as if in a grave. In any event, both places are

predominately "neutral": they do not mention punishment in the afterlife at all and therefore are mere "storehouses for the dead."

c.) Developments Regarding the Nature of the "Spirits of the Dead":

It is interesting to note that the above passages about the underworld mention little about the nature of the spirits of the dead. This may result from the date of composition of the texts, for later in the period the Chinese perception of the "spirits of the dead" underwent changes. As recorded in texts dated to the later Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the Chinese perception of the spirit became increasingly formulated. As established above, the spirits of the dead could dwell in several possible abodes: the Heavens; near the ancestral tablet in the ancestral temple; near the grave or tomb; in the Yellow Springs; or they could even manage an existence as an disembodied spirit. They could even theoretically exist in these three states simultaneously. Instead of settling on one thing or the other, the Chinese of antiquity apparently accommodated all aspects. This trait might be explained as a result from the need to accommodate all the various destinations of the dead, specifically those well-grounded in tradition, and those originating from different geographical regions and different time periods. Fused together with practices found at different levels of society, the resulting explanations hardly seem uniform or systematic.

In recent years, scholars have attempted to track the development of these new ideas by defining the nature of the spirit as it appeared during these periods. In general, Yü Yingshi and other scholars agree that by the sixth century BCE new developments occurred that supplemented the previous views of the spirit. In particular, the mid-Zhou witnessed the refinement of the
potential bi-partite notion of the spirit as seen in the Shang and the establishment of one in line with the later portrayals of the *hun* 魂 and *po* 魄 division of the spirit. As a graph, the term *po* means “white,” “bright,” or “bright light” and it appeared on oracle bones as early as the eleventh century BCE, but by the sixth century though the term appeared again but with broader connotations. Using the *Zuo Zhuan* as evidence, Yü believes that *po* was possibly perceived as a separate entity that joined the body from the outside and without it, a person lost intelligence (Yü 1987:371). Conversely, toward the end of the sixth century, the concept of *hun* appeared, which according to Yü, very little is known about the origin: he states merely that the idea may have originated in the Southern reaches of the Zhou world and slowly spread to the North by the sixth century (Yü 1987:372). By the fourth and third centuries BCE, however, these two ideas became the operative words to describe the spirits of the dead, brought about by the later growing popularity of *yin-yang* cosmology, in which *po* is allied with *yang* and *hun* with *yin* (Yü 1987:374-375).

As Heaven is characterized as the ultimate embodiment of *yang*, and Earth, as the ultimate embodiment of *yin*, both spiritual elements journeyed to these realms after death and were eventually reincorporated into the cycles of *yin* and *yang*. After death, the *hun* embarked on fantastic and often frightening journeys through the world until it was summoned back to the ancestral tablet or temple where it was nourished by sacrifice. On the other hand, the *po* remained near the corpse, in the Earth, where it was ideally nourished by the surviving relatives. If it were to leave the corpse and roam restlessly, it then became a *gui* 鬼, a “ghost,” or a “revenant,” a returning noxious spirit that haunts the living until propitiated (Loewe 1982:27). The true weight of these aspects, however, is not revealed in the *Zuo Zhuan* and other early texts. Rather, when
combined with other elements, particularly Chu cosmology of the South, these elaborations added new depth to the Chinese cosmology in general.

In particular, sections from the *Chuci* or “Songs of the South” composed by Qu Yuan presents the afterlife in terms substantially different from the passages from the *Zuo Zhuan* and *Hanshu*. The *Zhaohun* or “Summons of the Hun Spirit” reflects the most substantial description of Chu cosmology and it is this portrayal that influenced later interpretations of the afterlife. At the time the kingdom of Chu was located on the Yangzi River in the then Southern reaches of the Chinese world, and the beliefs of Chu are generally associated with shamanistic beliefs, including fantastic soul journeys of shamans and the spirits of the people themselves. These beliefs survived in Chu elite culture, perhaps due to location and distance from the more “Confucian” states of the North, who held the less rational shamanism in disdain.

In general, the poem reflects the desire of the living to bring the hun spirit back to the corpse, and, as a result, is viewed as being intimately tied to the *Fu* or “Summoning” ritual. The *Fu* ritual began when one was on the verge of death, and after the final breath, the “Summoning” occurred. At this point in time relatives rolled-up the deceased’s clothing and carried them to the top of the house by way of the East eaves. The summoner faced North and called out “Oh, so-and-so, Come Back!” He did this three times and then threw the clothing in the air, presumably to catch the spirit. On the ground an assistant received the clothes and placed them on the body of the deceased, reuniting the hun with the body and completing the ritual. Without the ritual and the hun spirit, for that matter, one could strongly argue, the body could not

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14 For a reconstruction of the *Fu* ritual, see Yū (1989).
be buried properly, and the spirit could potentially return as a gui or "revenant." Hence, it is logical to surmise that the often terrifying descriptions of the various regions of the world are methods to scare the spirit back to the body, thus securing proper burial.

In the following passages, the hun spirit is warned about the dangers of wandering away from the corpse and throughout the world. One by-product of these admonitions is the description of the perceived world, including that of the fate of the dead and that of the underworld. In all, the poem presents a stark and terrifying world populated by terrible mythical beings;\(^\text{15}\) in the East “There are giants there a thousand fathoms tall, who seek only for souls to catch, And ten suns that come out together, melting metal, dissolving stone. The folk that live there can bear it, but you soul, would be consumed” (19-21); in the South “There the people have tattooed faces and blackened teeth; They sacrifice flesh of men and pound their bones for meat paste. There the venomous cobra abounds, and the great fox that can run a hundred leagues, And the nine-headed serpent, who darts swiftly this way and that, And swallows men as a sweet relish” (24-28); in the West “The Moving Sands stretch for a hundred leagues. You will be swept into the Thunder’s Chasm and dashed in pieces, unable to defend yourself; And even should you chance to escape from that, beyond is the empty desert, And red ants as huge as elephants and wasps as big as gourds. The five grains do not grow there; dry stalks are the only food; And the earth there scorches men up; there is nowhere to look for water; And you will drift forever, with nowhere to go in that vastness” (31-37); in the North “There the layered ice rises high, and the snowflakes fly for a hundred leagues and more” (40). In addition, the Heavenly realms are also

described in similar terms as its gates are guarded by fierce animals, who perhaps prohibit entrance to the common dead:

O soul, come back! Climb not to heaven above,
For tigers and leopards guard the nine gates, with jaws ever ready to rend mortal men,
And one man with nine heads that can pull up nine thousand trees,
And the slant-eyed jackal-wolves pad to and fro;
They hang out men for sport and drop them in the abyss,
And at God's (Di 帝) command may they ever rest or sleep.
O soul, come back! Lest you fall into this danger (42-48).

The Earth as well is described in a like manner:

O soul, come back! Go not down to the Land of Darkness (Youdu 幽都),
Where the Earth God (Tubo 土伯) lies, nine-coiled, with dreadful horns on his forehead,
And with a great humped back and bloody thumbs, pursuing men swift-footed:
Three eyes he has in his tiger's head, and his body is like a bull's.
O soul, come back! Lest you bring on yourself disaster (49-53).

Based on the above passages, Maspero concluded that the underworld of this time was described as a "sort of Sheol in which all, both god and bad alike, are lumped together in the darkness, jealously guarded by the Earth God who devours them in the end" (Maspero 1981:28); it is this opinion that Thompson reiterates (Thompson 1989:29;31-33). It should be noted that this over reliance on this text and its subsequent interpretations is due, in part, to the then relative poverty of information on the topic. Archaeology during the time of Maspero and others did not
possess the later more substantial descriptions of the underworld, resulting in a picture eschew. The text implies that the proper place of the *hun* is by the corpse and near their descendants only, and that any journey to the underworld, or any other for that matter, are hence undesirable and not at all mandatory for all the dead. On the whole, the text seems to imply that any errant spirits will be destroyed, which is in line with burial practices and beliefs of the period, meaning that ancestors had to be controlled or at least monitored. Despite the fact that Maspero’s and Thompson’s analysis of the underworld as a terrible place for all the dead, which is dated, numerous elements from the *Zhao Hun* influenced later versions of the underworld. The personality of the Tubo, the “Earth God,” also later known as Houtu 后土 for example, lingers on in later versions of the underworld, while the Youdu or “Land of Darkness” or “Dark Realm” remains important in describing later versions of the underworld. These traits however will be examined later.

d.) The Emergence of “Demonology”:

Indirectly related to the topic of the afterlife and the relationship between the living and the dead is the concept of “demonology.” By definition, “demonology” stands in contrast to “ancestor worship.” According to their nature, “ancestors” are family-based and intimately tied to a specific family. The relationships are hence personal ones between the ancestors and family members. In contrast, “demons” are not necessarily attached to a specific family, but are most often random, impersonal forces of ubiquitous and possibly animistic nature. According to Cedzich, “demons” could be one of two types: random forces that dwelled in the earth, mountains, rivers, lakes, stones, trees, animals and even in worn-out household items;
conversely, they could also be discontented spirits of the dead, such as those who died prematurely or in a violent fashion (Cedzich 1993:28). Demonology is significant to the topic of the afterlife as it is related to the idea of human suffering, as the various guishen, the various spirits of the dead and deities, are entirely responsible for afflicting suffering on the living. In turn, these spirits directly fall under the jurisdiction of the numerous deities linked to the later bureaucracy of the cosmos and, in particular, the underworld.

Recently, Harper has argued that the idea of “demonology” existed as far back as the Shang (Harper 1990:210). Despite this presence at this early time, it appears as more peripheral in function compared to the central role of the ancestors. Harper writes that first true records of “demonology” can be found in the Later Warring States, specifically in the Zuo Zhuan (Harper 1985:479). Another text from this period is the Shanhaijing 山海經 the “Classic of Mountains and Seas” (mid fourth c. BCE).\(^{16}\) The text is primarily a “bestiary,” or an enumeration of various spiritual beings that inhabit the quadrants of the perceived world. No one knows the exact purpose of this text, and scholars propose that it is a talismanic text to forewarn its possessor about taking a shamanistic-like spirit quest (Harper 1985:479).\(^{17}\)

Other sources from this period make reference to state-sponsored rituals to drive out demonic forces. Derk Bodde's excellent Festivals in Classical China (1975) records numerous pre-Han and Han rituals. Of them perhaps the Da No 大儺 or “Great Exorcism,” performed on the eve of the Chinese New Year, is the most impressive. Bodde argues that versions of it were

\(^{16}\) The dating of this text is entirely problematic. Parts of it date to the late Warring States and some to the Han. Dates from Loewe (1982:213-14).

\(^{17}\) For a discussion of the latter point, see Needham (1954: 3.503).
first practiced in the early Warring States but appeared in China earlier (Bodde 1975:77). The ritual itself centers around a shaman or exorcist called a fangxiangshi 方相士, who drove out various pestilences. The Houhanshu 後漢書, “The Later Han History” in particular records more substantial accounts of similar rituals in which a huge entourage of palace attendants and the exorcist “expel pestilences” from the palace of the ruler. In the ritual, the exorcist is dressed as a demonic impersonator wearing “a bear skin having four eyes of gold, and clad in black upper garment and red lower garment, (and) grasps a lance and brandishes a shield” while “Palace Attendants of the Yellow Gates act as twelve “animals,” wearing fur, feathers and horns, and the Supervisor of the Retinue leads them to expel demons from the palace.” They then go through each of the palace rooms and chase out evil spirits. Other elements of the retinue, armed with “peach wood staffs” and “rush spears,” stand at the ready presumably to beat any unwary spirits. The text also tells that the retinue at the end establishes “peach wood figurines “ and sets out “rush cords” to subdue and restrain demons. In sum, the entire matrix of the “Great Exorcism” and other similar rituals resemble a great hunt: the exorcist runs in to the rooms to chase out demons while the various attendants, armed with numinous weapons, beat them into submission and bind them.

In addition to the hunt motif, other texts suggest different methods for dealing with demons. For examples of this trait, Harper uses the recently discovered texts dating to the third and second centuries BCE. The texts are entitled respectively as Ms A, the Rijing 日經, or the “Day Book” both unearthed from a tomb in Shuihudi 睦虎地 of Hubei province 湖北. Both

tombs are dated to 218 BCE. He also uses the *Wushier bingfang* 五十二病方, “Recipes for Fifty-two Ailments” from a tomb dated to 168 BCE. Important points from the texts are summarized in the following paragraph.

First, Ms A contains a section on demonology entitled *jie*. According to Harper’s research on the topic, *jie* possesses legal connotations referring specifically to the investigation of criminal accusations: it implies “accusation” or to “accuse,” a process alluding to the interrogation of parties which includes the flogging to get to the truth; to obligate oneself to the spirits by means of a written document; the use of written testimony as incontrovertible evidence for testing the veracity of witnesses; and practices involving oaths and spells that magically obligated men and demons (Harper 1985:472;478-79). In the end Harper arrives at the term “spellbinding” as the most suitable translation (Harper 1985:479). Poo, on the other hand, translates the character as “Inquiry,” implying a means to identify specific spirits for exorcism, and once identified the most efficacious or appropriate technique can be used (Poo 1998:79). In contrast, the “Day Book” is not an exorcistic manual, but a guide book on how to avoid demonic affliction. Among other things, the “Day Book” speaks of auspicious and inauspicious days for practically every aspect of daily life: marriage, childbirth, auspicious days for eating and drinking, slaughtering farm animals, harvesting, making garments, and specific days of the year when the Earth could not be violated, construction work could not be carried out, and for washing hair (Poo 1998:74; Harper 1985: 468). If one violated these taboos, then demons received license to afflict the living, revealing the perceived source of suffering in this world and the ubiquitous influence of demonic forces. Next, the *Wushier bingfang* or “Recipes for Fifty-two Ailments” as the name implies is more concerned with curing illness. The categories of illness
mentioned in the text refer to "blade wounds," treatments for stanching wounds, easing pain, preventing scars, body stiffness, spasmodic attacks, "lumping" caused by improper exposure to stars at night, poisons, wart removal, among other things (Harper 1982:16ff). Of the fifty-two ailments, 38 are magical recipes, often involving incantation and complex exorcistic rites invoking spiritual assistance from higher powers. In most cases the demonic intruders became the spiritual embodiment of the disease. To rid the body of the disease, the exorcist appealed to higher deities, for example, the Huangshen 黃神 or "Yellow Deity," the Tianshen 天神 the "Celestial Deity," and the Shennu 神女 "Spirit Maidens," to bring the troublesome spirits in line. Combined with this, the exorcist threatened the spirits and chased them out. Like the use of the term jie, exorcism at this juncture involved judicial process and appeals to a higher authority, in this case more powerful deities, to drive out pestilence.

Together the above examples paint a picture of a world populated by demons and one where people suffer from their afflictions. So ubiquitous were these beliefs that the dominated practically every dimension of life during these periods. As Wang Chong wrote in the first century CE

It is a common belief that evil influences cause our diseases and our deaths, and that in case of continual calamities, penalties, ignominious execution, and derision there has been some offense. When in commencing a building, in moving our residence, in sacrificing, mourning, burying, and other rites, in taking up office or marrying, no lucky day has been chosen, or an unpropitious year or month have not been avoided, one falls in with demons and meets spirits, which at that time work disaster. Thus sickness, misfortunes, the implication in criminal cases, punishments and even deaths, the destruction of a family, and the annihilation of a whole house are brought about by carelessness and disregard of an unfortunate
period of time (Forke I:525).

Obviously, this stands in contrast to the previous views of human suffering, in that the bulk of the early sources represents the views of the elite of the time, hence, the focus on ancestors. On the other hand, the *Rijing* and the *Wushier bingfang* represent the views of different levels of Chinese society, specifically those of the middle and lower segments of society. Poo, for example, argues that texts such as the "Day Book" reflect beliefs falling outside of the context of court ritual (Poo 1998:69-70). In general though these texts are important because they provide us with a more comprehensive view of the perceived relationship between the human and spirit world and the resultive sense of retributive supernatural justice meted out in this world. Here, "morality" implies not violating established laws of social conduct, rather breaking specific taboos and hence personally offending the sundry ghosts and spirits.

To counter these harmful forces, though, religious practitioners could draw on a variety of different means to affect their expulsion: the "hunt" motif, legalistic mechanisms, and a system of incantations and appeals to higher powers. Some, especially the legalistic motifs and the system of appeals, evoke images of government affairs in the mundane realm, which indeed is their influence. The "hunt" motif and the threats of calling on higher deities to drive out our punish the smaller spirits evokes images of violence, and given that the demons are particularly noxious, it is logical to fight fire with fire by using threats of violence. In sum the above traits, legalistic terminology, the appeals, and the threats of violence characterize the relationships between the mundane and spirit realm in general, and these influences last even to this day as evident in popular religious practice in China, Taiwan, and Chinese communities abroad. It is a relationship important to this thesis because the various ghosts and demons fall under the control
of particular deities, specifically those linked to the afterlife and the underworld, a trait that continued to develop in the Han and after. Mention of these aspects above also points to seminal ideas that later formed the backbone of how Taoists dealt with potentially problematic spirits, a topic that will be discussed in the following chapters.

IV. Beliefs of the Qin and Han-Towards a “Moral Death”:

The ruthless competition of the Warring States Period came to an end in 221 BCE when the Western State of Qin conquered its rivals. Under the harsh leadership of the despotic Qin ruler, Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇帝, China became an Empire for the first time in its history. In replacing the older feudal institutions of the Zhou, the Qin established an Empire under the control of a more centralized government. To organize its state and to eliminate the possibility of the older aristocratic lineages rising up against the government, the Qin utilized the so-called “Legalist” philosophy which served them well during the Warring States period. According to this school of thought, birth and lineage did not determine one’s place in society or the government. Instead, the central government appointed its officials. The system of government established by the Qin has been often described as “bureaucratic,” which in this context implies a system of offices and officers, not only appointed by the central government, but also one governed by procedure and standardization. To this end, in addition to standardizing the lawcode, the written language, the coinage, weights and measures, and even the gauge of cart axles, the Qin established an extensive system of offices, standardized judicial procedures, record-keeping, codified laws recording a system of equal and impersonal laws.

Due to the tyranny of the Qin, revolt and dissent eventually brought the downfall of the
Qin. In 206 BCE it was replaced by the Han Dynasty. The Han, however, did not entirely abandon the Qin policy of centralizing the government under a bureaucracy and later struck a balance between the aristocratic inclinations of the Zhou and the bureaucratic methods of the Qin by appointing aristocrats to important positions in the government. The Han lasted until 221 CE, but for decades previous China was in turmoil. Financial problems, corruption in the government, a resurgence of the aristocracy, barbarian invasions and internal rebellion contributed to its eventual downfall. During the preceding centuries, peasant rebellions, often organized along religious lines occurred.

For the Han, the problem of human suffering was not dissimilar from the previous Dynasties. Still, suffering was explained as a direct result of a relationship with the spirit world. It differed from the previous views of human suffering perhaps only in the way these problems were dealt with. In addition to the ritual pacification and propitiation of the ancestors and the sundry ghosts and demons, the people of the Han appealed to higher deities to solve dilemmas caused by the spirit world. Some of these deities, it should be noted, lorded over the spirits of the dead and are hence intimately linked to the underworld. To serve this end, the people increasingly relied on paradigms established in the mundane realm, particularly those established by government procedure. Hence, changes in this world imparted changes in the spirit world as well, as the cosmos became increasingly viewed being staffed by bureaucrats and most affairs were handled by judicial process, and the spirits of the dead were “administered” like the living. Thus at this point we begin to see the first inklings of a “moral death.” To place changes in the perception of the underworld at this juncture, this section will analyze the following topics: the cosmology of the Qin and Han Dynasties; the bureaucracy of the underworld; and the condition
of the dead in the underworld and the related Qin and Han view of guilt.

a.) The Cosmos-Its Structure and Its Responsibilities and the Idea of Paradise:

As a whole, the cosmology of the Qin and especially the Han reflect a continuation of ideas established previously in the Zhou and Warring States periods. Needless to say, this reflects ideas that existed before the advent of the naturalistic yin-yang philosophy, which by the later Han became the most dominant model of the cosmos. Still, the ideas of ancestral worship, the hun and po division, and a potential existence as a disembodied ghost remained central. The view in general differs from the former in the ideas surrounding the idea of a post-mortem Paradise and an underworld became more fully developed, or at least more evident, due to an increased amount of sources.

In general, during the Qin and Han the cosmos was increasingly described in governmental terms, in many ways matching the function of its mundane counterpart. In this view, Heaven is viewed as possessing certain administrative and judicial responsibilities, and it was structured along the lines of contemporary offices in the mundane realm. Harper argues that the first evidence of this “bureaucratization” is found in the same Chu Silk Manuscript that lists the Yellow Springs, thereby dating the emergence of this trend to about the fourth century BCE. The text itself lists that four mensual spirits who each “direct” or si 司 one of the four seasons (Harper 1994:19). Harper writes that later practices in the administrations of the cosmos followed, coinciding with administrative documents or registers of the local populace which appeared in Chu in the last quarter of the fourth century BCE, an idea implemented by Shang Yang 商鞅 (mid-fourth century BCE) in Qin, who proposed that the state register mature men
and women, and, upon death, their names are removed from the state registers (Harper 1994:19).

The first century CE accounts of Wang Chong provide us with the best descriptions of the bureaucratic structure of the cosmos and its responsibilities. In his philippics against popular beliefs, Wang Chong states that the cosmos was patterned directly after the government of the day, in that Tianshen, or “Celestial Spirit,” the same deity mentioned in the *Wushier bingfang*, dwelled in a Palace much like a human sovereign, and possessed certain administrative and judicial responsibilities (Forke 1:313). Not only did the Celestial Spirit keep records of the living and the dead, this deity and the Heaven Realms endowed two fates, or *Ming* 命, to each individual at birth: one that determines those events “that he must encounter in life,” and another that determines the fate “of strength and weakness of the length and shortness life” (Forke 1:313).

In addition to lording over the initial fate of one’s life, the Celestial Spirit also presided over the interim, meaning that it judged the actions of the living. It then punished or rewarded the wicked and good accordingly:

> It is commonly believed that those who practice goodness meet with good fortune, that those who perform misdeeds meet with calamity, and that this response of both good fortune and calamity (stems) from Heaven. Heaven responds to what humans do. The Lords of the People reward obvious mercy, while Heaven and Earth repay the virtue of secret kindness (*Fuxu* 福虚; *Errors Regarding Good Fortune*; My translation based on Forke I:156).

Wang Chong states above that elements of these beliefs are false. Like kings in the human realm the Celestial Spirit is remote and uninterested in human affairs and that it is most likely the same sundry ghosts and spirits of the aforementioned *Day Book* and the *Recipes for the Fifty-two*
Ailments, the guishen, who punish the wicked:

Rulers and the people are distant from one another and (Rulers) do not know of their secret misdeeds, and as the Celestial Spirit is within his Four Palaces, how would he know the secret faults of his people? Rulers hear of people's transgressions by means of the people; Heaven most certainly learns of people's misdeeds by relying on ghosts. If Heaven hears of misdeeds by means of the guishen, then punishment for these affairs, are certainly caused by guishen. If this is caused by guishen, then the so-called “Anger of Heaven” (really results) from the guishen, and not from Heaven (Leixu; Errors Regarding Lightning and Thunder, 32 p. 1369ff; My translation based on Forke I:290-91).

It is significant to note that the idea of punishing the dead does not appear in Wang Chong's writings. This lead us to surmise that regardless of punishment by Tianshen or by the sundry ghosts and spirits, the realm of the living is more “moral” than the realm of the dead. Here, “useful death,” meaning the retributive qualities of the vindictive guishen, apparently functioned as the sole means to punish the wicked. In short, like the previous views of the Shang and the Zhou, life is the arena where one is punished.

Within this cosmological framework of the Qin and Han is found another aspect revealed from Han sources: the idea of paradises for the dead. The recent work of Michael Loewe (1979, 1982), Yü Yingshi (1987), Xiao Dengfu (1987a, 1987b), and Poo Moo-chou (1994;1998), supply us with substantial detail of elaborate paradises that came into view in the Han, ideas based on seminal ideas existing in the Shang and Warring States Periods. The source of this new research stems from recent archeological discoveries, which paint a picture of the cosmos far richer than textual sources previously revealed. Such Paradises are as follows: the “Blessed Islands of the
East,” a magical realm of the West under the Xi Wang Mu 西王母, the Queen Mother of the West, a vague notion of an ordered and possibly pleasant existence for the po spirit in the Yellow Springs, and a type of existence placed in terms of underlining the fabric of the cosmos itself (Loewe 1982:27-28). Undoubtedly, the most famous of these realms are the “Blessed Isles of the East” and the mystical island of Penglai 蓬萊. The Liezi 列子, a Taoist text dating to a period between 300 BCE and the third or fourth century CE, records the following account of the Eastern Paradises:

There are five mountains there, called Tai-yu, Yuan-chiao, Fang-hu, Ying-chou and P’eng-lai. These mountains are thirty thousand leagues in height and girth, and there is a flat plane at the summit which stretches for nine thousand leagues. They lie at a distance of seventy thousand leagues from one another, but they are thought to be like neighbors. The terraces and the towers at the top are made of gold and jade; the animals are all pure white. Trees of pearl and precious gems flourish there, with flowers and fruit of a delicious taste. None of those that eat of them grow old or die, and the persons who live there are all of a breed of immortal beings or holy men.19

Entrance to these realms could be obtained either when alive or after death. If alive, one could enter these realms through alchemical means, meaning the ingestion of elixirs or the consumption of magical plants from these areas, or even by practicing bodily exercises. In doing so, one could attain a type of physical immortality, longevity, or a deathless state of existence or of the status of a Xian 習 or Immortal. Otherwise, one could attain these realms through the proper performance of funeral ritual in which the spirits of the dead journeyed to and, thereby

transformed themselves and obtained a deathless state in the post-mortem realm.

Recent research has pointed out that there are numerous variations to this complex theme. As a result, only a few aspects of these beliefs will be mentioned below. For example, tomb-finds such as the so-called Feiyi 非衣 tentatively dated to 168 BCE, the TLV Mirrors, defined below, collected from various Han tombs, and numerous other artifacts, illustrate facets of the hun’s journey after death. They primarily illustrate that after death the spirit embarked on an often dangerous journey through the afterlife, most often guided by the preparations of the living. First is the so-called Feiyi of Lady Xin Zhui 辛追, the Countess of Tai. Loewe, Yü, Xiao and others argue that the Feiyi portrays the journey of one part of the spirit and based on motifs expressed in the Chuci, the Shanhai jing, the Liji and other texts. It has been argued that the banner is most likely a means to guide the spirit first to Penglai, where the spirit ingests elixirs or plants of immortality. If successful in consuming the plants there, the hun then continues to the ultimate destination on the “left and right of Shangdi” in the Heavens. In a similar vein, the so-called TLV mirrors also served to guide the hun through the perils of the afterlife. The TLV mirrors, aptly named as they portray corresponding designs embossed on its outer surface indicating the structure of the cosmos, may have served as a map to guide the spirit. Combined with the allusion that the polished side of the mirror supplies light, these mirrors, not only guided the hun spirit through the afterlife in search of a Paradise, they also lit the way through the dangerous realms of the cosmos.

20 No one know the true function of the Feiyi. Loewe proposes that this is a banner used in conjunction with burial rites and carried in a procession (Loewe 1979:30). Yü proposes that the Feiyi is in fact a burial shroud and is linked to the Fu ritual mentioned above. He argues that is reflects the cosmos as related in the Zhaohun and Dazhao poems from the Chuci (1987).
21 For a discussion of the TLV Mirrors, see Loewe (1979).
The *po* spirit, too, received attention in burial practice. Again, like in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, the inclusion of grave goods served as a means to pacify the *po* spirit. Miniatures of grave attendants, musicians, acrobats, and miniatures of houses and wells, among other useful utensils for the afterlife, supplied its needs in the grave or in *Dixia*. There it was hoped the *po* remained happy, entertained by and provided with all the trappings of a comfortable existence. The living, too, took precautions to ensure that the *po* could not leave the tomb. This was accomplished by the use of extra chambers or coffins in the tomb, thereby, prohibiting the *po* from coming back as a revenant. In addition, tokens, recording the station of the deceased, his rank, implies that in the afterlife, the spirit would receive a comfortable existence according to rank, implying that like the Han poetry, a hierarchy existed in the underworld and afterlife in general.

Attempts to pacify the *po* spirit and catering to its every needs, it could be strongly argued, imply a type of separation between the living and the dead. It was hoped, as revealed by this evidence and others, that the dead, would not desire to, or could not for that matter, return as a revenant to wreak disaster on the living descendants and others, in accord with “ancestor worship” and even demonology. On the other hand, the *hun* spirit, even though ideally in the Qin and Han paradises, still descended on specific days or festivals to the ancestral temples and ancestral tablets to receive sacrifice, and sustenance to bestow their blessings on the living.

As elaborate and comprehensive as these procedures seem, they were not practiced by all of Chinese society. Specifically, these beliefs were adhered to only by the elite of Chinese society, meaning the rulers, the officialdom, and specific religious practitioners, the *fangshi* “ritual specialists,” who practiced the secrets of immortality. The common people, the middle
and lower classes of society, apparently lacking these options due to financial reasons, a high degree of illiteracy and other factors, apparently had no access to these techniques and, hence, to the various paradises. According to Poo, the only avenue for immortality the non-elite possessed centered on worship of the Queen Mother of the West, the Xi Wang Mu and the inclusion of TLV mirrors in tombs (Poo 1998:162-3). Still, it is conceivable that the lowest levels of society not only did not practice these techniques, they probably didn't even understand them at all. As the next section demonstrates, by the beginning of the Qin and Han, it seems that the common people still adhered to the idea of a post-mortem existence as a ghost or even an existence in the underworld, an existence that mirrored their life in this world.

b.) The Bureaucracy of the Underworld:

As mentioned above, the Celestial Realms, including the Paradises associated with it, were most likely reserved primarily for the elite of the Han society or even specific religious practitioners. On the other hand, the people of the middle and lowest rungs of society, which in fact made up the largest proportion of society, with a few exceptions, were fated to an existence in the underworld or dixia, as a disembodied ghost, or perhaps both.

Like the situation regarding the recent portrayals of the afterlife regarding Paradises and access to these realms, recent archeological finds have made our view of the Qin and Han afterlife more complete. Grave finds, specifically written documents included in tombs of members of society falling outside of the elite class, have thereby filled in the gaps regarding our understanding of religious practices of the common people during the Qin and Han. Scholars
such as Terry Kleeman (1984), Anna Seidel (1987a), Angelica Cedzich (1993), Donald Harper (1994), Valerie Hansen (1995), and Poo Mu-chou (1994;1998) have used these new finds to paint a picture more heretofore unknown.

The first example is found in Donald Harper’s “Resurrection in Warring States Popular Culture” (1994), a study of a bamboo-slip manuscript dated to the late Warring States. It deserves attention because this is one of earliest concrete examples of the “bureaucratization” of the cosmos (Harper 1994:18), and is significant because it offers one of the most complete records of popular beliefs regarding the afterlife.

To continue, the history and subject matter of the bamboo slips are as follows. The slips were excavated in 1986 in Tomb 1 at Fangmatan in Gansu province, then part of the Qin state. The text itself records the death and subsequent resurrection of a man named Dan in 297 BCE. The process involved in Dan’s resurrection recounts bureaucratic record-keeping and procedure based on Qin judicial process, for even a copy was submitted to the Royal Scribe, Yushi, of the state of Qin, matching the copy placed in the grave (Harper 1994:15). This suggests that similar record keeping occurred in the Celestial Bureaucracy as well with all the potential mistakes that could be made. It stands to reason, that if the government of this world made clerical errors, so could the offices of the afterlife. Thus, an anxiety regarding the accuracy of the record-keeping in the afterlife exists as well. Appeals, just like those in the mundane realm could potentially restore one back to life if one died unjustly or prematurely.

Harper has divided the text into three sections. The first section is an example of Qin record-keeping. It records the date of the document, the location of the event, and who submitted
the document to the Qin court. In this case it is the Administrator of Di 邕, named Chi 赤. The second section, however, records the events surrounding the death of Dan. It lists the following:

In the seventh year of the current reign (300 BCE), Dan injured a man by stabbing him in Yuanyong Village; and because of it he killed himself with his sword. They exposed him in the market. Three days later they buried him outside the south gate of Yuanyong. Three years later Dan was able to be restored to life. The reason why Dan could be restored to life was because I was Xi Wu’s Caretaker. The reason why Xi Wu 厳武 disputed his Caretaker's life-mandate was because he thought that Dan was not yet fated to die. Therefore he made a declaration to the Scribe of the Director of the Life-mandate 司命史, Gongsun Qiang 公孫強, who then had a white dog dig up the pit to let Dan out. He stood on the tomb for three days. Then he departed northwards to Zhao in company with the Scribe of the Director of Life-mandate, Gongsun Qiang, and went to Boqiu in the North Territory. Fully four years later he then heard dogs barking and roosters crowing, and he ate human food. His body had a scar on the throat and sparse eyebrow hair; it was inky; and his four limbs were useless (Harper 1994:14).

The above section states that Dan injured a man, and, perhaps out of grief or even fear of punishment, took his own life. His body was then exposed in the market for retribution. His patron, Xi Wu, a general of Wei (d. 293 BCE) disputed Dan’s death, believing the death to be “not fated” or “not warranted.” 22 He then appealed to the deities of the afterlife, in this case Gongsun Qiang, identified as the Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate. 23 The appeal is

22 Harper translates wei dang si 未當死 as “(the person) does not warrant death” (Harper 1994:22).
23 Harper argues that this figure is a historical one, one infamous for his part in the destruction of the state of Cao in 487 BCE (Harper 1994:16).
obviously successful, and Dan is resurrected, albeit in state not resembling his former self: for
four years after his return, he could not hear and he could not eat, and his appearance was marked
by a scar on his throat, with sparse, inky eyebrow hair and useless limbs.

The third section is more concerned with a description of the condition of the spirits than
bureaucratic process. It continues:

Dan says: "The dead do not want many clothes. People in the market think that
white woolly-grass is fortunate; when the ghosts receive (offerings) in something
else they still think it is fortunate." Dan says: "Let those who offer sacrifices at
tombs not to dare to spit. If they spit, the ghosts depart and file in fright. After the
sacrificial food has been collected, empty (the vessels). In this way (?) eat (?)". Dan says: "Those who offer sacrifices must carefully sweep and purify. Do not
wash the place of sacrifice with (?). Do not pour the boiled dish over the
sacrificial food, for the ghosts will not eat it." (Harper 1994:14)

To reiterate, the above passage demonstrates the condition of ghosts. Harper believes this
section does not describe aspects of life of the dead in the underworld (Harper 1994:16). Poo,
however, states that from this passage the dead live continually in tombs, suggesting location
itself for the world of the dead (Poo 1998:66). This means that the realm of the dead was near the
tomb or perhaps in the tomb itself. In fact, there seems to be little to support these positions, as
there is real mention of the underworld at all and only a passing mention of the tomb. In short,
the text seems to focus on how the dead exist in a disembodied state, and one dependent on the
sacrifices supplied by the living, including clothes and offerings of food and how they are to be
sacrificed: the sacrificial area is to be the cleaned and spitting is to be avoided as it frightens
away the spirits. In short, Dan's description tells us little of the underworld and most likely reflects beliefs more common to the middle and lower levels of Chinese society. In any event, the text remains important because it demonstrates ritual relationship between the realm of the living and the cosmos, as revealed by the appeals to the higher deities to restore life.

Other types of grave texts illustrate the function and structure of the Han underworld. Of particular interest are the so-called "tomb contracts," "grave-quelling texts," also known as the "celestial ordinances" which first appeared during the second century BCE. In short, these texts are included with the deceased, and, as they would provide no other function for the living, were meant exclusively for the perusal of the deities of the cosmos. In particular, the subject matter of these texts illustrate how this bureaucracy functioned, and how the living communicated with these offices.

These ordinances usually took the form of an imperial edict, a *chi* or "proclamation," to be delivered to a large cast of deities related to the cosmos and the underworld in general. Often these texts were delivered by an emissary of the Tiandi 天帝, the "Celestial Thearch" the highest deity mentioned in these ordinances. These orders were then relayed through an envoy, such as the Tiandi Shizhe 天帝史者 to lower officials, such as the Qiucheng 丘丞, the "Deputy of the Grave Mound", Mubo 慕伯, the "Earl of the Tomb" and the Dixia Erqian Dan 地下二千石, the "2,000 Bushel Officials" (Seidel 1987a: 28; Hansen 1994:153). In addition there are numerous other deities involved in this chain, such as the Huangshen 黄神, the "Yellow Spirit" or "Yellow Deity," the Wuyue 五嶽, the "Five Marchmounts" and Taishan 太
As will be seen, all of these deities hold fairly specific responsibilities over the living and the dead. Among other things, the next set of texts reveal that the various offices of the cosmos presided over the registration of the spirits. Dan's resurrection, however, shows that, for the most part, the common people viewed the afterlife differently from the elite, in that in the afterlife the dead existed as ghosts. In short, for the common people death is not perceived as a journey to a paradise. In a similar vein, other grave texts show that the common people believed that both the hun and po proceeded together to the area "Under-the-Earth" and under the jurisdiction of the Five Marchmounts, who in turn were under the control of the "Yellow God." Both apparently controlled the registers of the living and summoned the spirits of the dead (Seidel 1987a:30-31). According to Seidel, these "registers," or Lu 綠, indicate the exact time and date when one is due to die and be summoned to the underworld. She also states that is not clear if Five Marchmounts also kept these registers or if duplicate copies also existed for each set of deities (Seidel 1987a:32).

The subject matter of these texts qualify beliefs of the day. Seidel argues that there are four categories of funeral texts. The first and most famous are the land contracts or diquan 地券, documents attesting to the deceased's ownership of the grave plot. Modeled after secular sales contracts, they often record the purchase of the land, the buyer and seller, location, dimension of the plot, the price and the witnesses to the sale. The earliest example of this type is dated to 82

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24 The Five Marchmounts are Taishan, the Eastern Peak 東嶽泰山, Hengshan, the Southern Peak 南嶽衡山, Huashan, the Western Peak 西嶽華山, Hengshan, the Northern Peak 北嶽恆山, and Songshan, the Central Peak 中嶽嵩山.
CE and these contracts are often written in red or black ink on lead, stone or jade tablets or on ceramic tiles (Seidel 1987a:24). The second category is the zhenmuwen 鎮墓文 or “documents to ward off evil from the tomb,” also described by Seidel as the “celestial ordinances for the dead.” The majority of these ordinances are written in red or black and unglazed pottery jars. They appear in tombs from the end of the first to the end of the second century CE. Like official documents, they function like passports for the dead, introducing the deceased to the Netherworld administration. The third category are the Yiwuquan 衣物券, “inventory of clothing and articles.” In short, these are perhaps the earliest form of grave texts and are proclamations to the Earthly deities stating the inventory of grave goods. Some of these texts are written on wooden tablets (Seidel 1987a:25). The fourth class is composed of fu 符 or “talismans,” “incantations” or “seals” of Celestial Deities. These seals often accompany other texts at the end of ordinances or combined with demon-subduing spells to ensure that demons did not attack the corpse in the tomb (Seidel 1987a:27).

In all, these texts possess three overwhelming themes. The first concerns proper procedure for purchasing land from the Earth Gods. The land contracts, in particular, are legal and binding contracts between the living, the dead, and the terrestrial deities recording the transaction. The idea of purchasing land from the gods was a means to avoid invoking the anger of these deities as digging in the ground, for example, building houses and digging graves, violated the earth and taboos associated with it. In this light, elements of these texts are meant to propitiate the anger of the deities so they do not vent their anger on the living. This facet however will be covered in the next section. The second aspect concerns wrongful or premature death,
aspects similar to the case of the resurrection of Dan. It was hoped, as revealed in numerous examples of these texts, that the Celestial Bureaucracy made a clerical error and summoned the wrong person, revealing that these texts are appeals to the gods of the cosmos. The third theme presented in these texts concerns the separation of the dead from the living. Providing the dead with the proper documents or passports for the perusal of the gods of the afterlife is an attempt to speed the entrance of the dead into the underworld and hence lessen the chances of the dead returning to haunt the living by implying that the spirit of the deceased was solely in the jurisdiction of the gods of the afterlife.

For the living and the dead, there are two distinct administrations and each possessed its own sets of registers. Seidel for example argues that this separation of registers for the living and the dead is most likely an attempt to maintain segregation between the living and the dead (Seidel 1987a:30-31). For example, the following grave text dated to 175 CE records that there is to be no contact between the living and the dead, implying that the administration of the afterlife was responsible for ensuring that the dead did not return as a revenant. The following ordinance for Xu Wenta 襄文臺 dated to 175 CE records the following:

Heaven above is blue,
Limitless is the Underworld.
The dead belong to the realm of Yin,
The living belong to the realm of Yang.
[The living have] their village home,
The dead have their hamlets.
The living are under the jurisdiction of Ch’ang-an (Changan) in the West,
The dead are under the jurisdiction of Mount T’ai (Taishan) in the East.
In joy they do not [remember] each other,
[In grief] they do not think of one another  
(Seidel 1987a:31)

In addition, often the subject matter of these texts record a common anxiety, that of premature death. From the texts it seems that, like any bureaucracy, mistakes could be made in record keeping. They gods of the afterlife, for example, may have summoned a person possessing a similar name or they may have summoned the person prematurely. In both case, death or wrongful death, could be appealed. In the following ordinance, of Cheng Taotui 成桃推 dated to 156 CE, the living petition the gods of the afterlife to recheck their records, and, if any mistakes were made reconstitute the dead, possibly in the same way as Dan’s life was restored:

The day and hour of his death overlap with the lifespan [of other persons] so that living family member[s] have been implicated [in the fate of the deceased]. Upon receipt of the register, their lifespan is to be restituted to them; the duplicate copy [in the netherworld?] is to be eliminated and their entanglement [with the deceased] in corvée registers (Wuzhiji 五之籍) is to be dissolved. The dead and living are to be recorded in different files! (Seidel 1987a:33).

In all, the above texts reveal that the grave contracts are meant more for the living than for the dead. The idea of the separation of the dead form the living is most likely an attempt to limit the baleful influences of the dead. On the other hand, the idea of appealing “wrongful death” is clearly a means to bring someone back to life and to make certain that the administration of the afterlife does not call someone to death in the future. Despite their detail of the functioning of the afterlife, these texts reveal little about the condition of the dead in the Netherworld. However, the mention of corvée ledgers and corvée labor does suggest that the dead labor in the underworld, which some scholars have interpreted as indicating punishment in
the afterlife. An analysis of this aspect is presented in the next section.

c.) The Condition of the Dead in the Underworld and the Concept of Guilt:

According to the sources and research on the topic, the dead in the underworld of the Qin and Han either existed in a placid, lonely, or "neutral" state, but one slightly similar to existence in this world, or they served under the administration of the afterlife, laboring and toiling for the government as they did in former lives. Some scholars have even suggested that during the Han the dead are even punished in the afterlife possibly for their immorality.

First, we should examine the idea of a placid or "neutral" state in the afterlife. To start, Wang Chong wrote this about the condition of the dead in the tomb. He wrote:

Thus ordinary people, on the one side, have these very doubtful arguments, and, on the other, they hear of Earl Tu and the like, and note that the dead in their tombs arise and have intercourse with sick people when the end is near. They, then, believe in this, and imagine that the dead are like the living. They commiserate them that their graves are so lonely, that their souls are so solitary and without companions, that their tombs and mounds are closed and devoid of grain and other things... Therefore, they make dummies to serve their corpses in their coffins and fill the latter with eatables, to gratify the spirits. This custom has become so inveterate, and has gone to such lengths that very often people will ruin their families and use up all of their property for the coffins of the dead (Forke II:369).

In essence, the ideas expressed above are little different from those of the Han poems and Dan's account of the condition of the dead, demonstrating that the dead like the living require food for sustenance in the tomb. So, too, they require entertainment and company in the grave due to the
fact that existence there is lonely. To alleviate this loneliness, the living fashion “dummies” to entertain the dead and, as will be demonstrated later, to work for the dead.

The next view of existence in the underworld concerns that of one toiling for the administration of the afterlife. As mentioned in the above sections, a full-blown bureaucracy existed in the afterlife to managed the spirits of the dead. It stands to reason then if such a government existed in the afterlife, then it too required service of its minions. For example, the previously mentioned grave ordinance of Cheng Taotui supplies use with an example of the responsibility required of the dead. Namely, the mention of the corvée registers, Wuzhi or Wuji 五籍, raises some interesting questions about the perceived existence in the underworld during the late Han. Namely, scholars such as Strickmann (1979) and specifically Seidel (1987a) have used its presence as an indication of punishment in the underworld at this time. But they have not examined this concept in great detail and their conclusions appear a bit premature.

To start, the term Wuji refers to the official records of the mutually responsible teams of five households suggested by the Legalist Shang Yang of the fourth century BCE. Ideally, this unit was an official administrative unit and the smallest unit of an hierarchical chain in the government, falling under districts, townships, which were divided into 1,000 unit households, 100 unit households, and then smaller responsible groups of five and 10 families. Among other things, this division was an effective way to tax, monitor, and mobilize the population for corvée labor. In Qin and Han China, forced labor often took the form of construction gangs, or menial

25 See Strickmann (1979:181). He mentions the use of this term in the context of later Taoist texts, specifically those of the fifth and sixth centuries CE. Seidel mentions states “Corvée labor was one of the punishments meted out in the underworld” (Seidel 1987a:50, n. 44). But, its presence here does not seem to imply punishment at this time.
labor for constructing dams, roads, canals, and tilling government land (Ch'ü 1972:144-145). For the common people, this type of service was an expected required service of each family. It is interesting to note that the members of the upper class were exempt from this type of service and was avoided by families through donations of slaves to these ventures. Yet, at the same time, some prominent families simply ignored any requests (Ch'ü 1972:348;232). Forced labor was also a form of punishing convicts, who were frequently assigned to frontier areas to open up land. Thus, this type of labor had the dual function of exiling or punishing criminals and extracting labor for government projects. Criminals in this context were identified by the characters tu 徒, nu奴, or bi婢, convict, male slave and female slave respectively. Absence of the use of these characters in these grave texts apparently eliminates the possibility of the dead being treated as criminals in the afterlife and consequently punished.

In a similar vein, the inclusion of figurines of laborers in Han tombs has been held up as possible proof of post-mortem punishment. The grave-ordinance of the household of Master Jia 加氏 dated to 147 CE in particular illustrates this point. In it is mention of specific tasks the leaden figurines are to perform in the underworld in the place of the deceased. This includes threshing grain, cooking and other tasks:

In the first year of the Jianhe Emperor 建和 (147 CE), the eleventh month, the dingwei day, the fourteenth for release (from responsibility 解). Submitted to the Envoy of the Celestial Thearch, humbly, on behalf of the household of Master Jia for the perusal of the Marquise of the Dead in the underworld. As (the wife of Master) Jia just died in her twenty-fourth year, peruse your registers of names to check if the year and month are in accord; again and again, investigate if the date

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26 For a discussion of these terms and their implications see Wilbur (1943:64ff).
of death is the same (in the records). (We) cry out so you will, again and again, investigate the date of death. (We) inform the Upper Director of the Life Mandate and the Director of the Lower Records. The sons and grandsons and other descendants inform the Imperial Envoy of the Tomb, so these words and affairs are together passed on. This person (Jia’s wife) is represented by these leaden men, so these leaden men can, at their leisure, thresh the grain, cook, drive the carriage, and hold a stylus to write. We proclaim this to the Chief Earls of the Middle and High ranks who roam the frontiers (of the otherworld?). For one thousand autumns, ten thousand years, forever, may the affairs of the living (and the dead) never coincide.... (Wenwu 1958 7:62; My translation based on Seidel (1987a:32)).

Kleeman mentions that due to the presence of these figures and the enumeration of their tasks implies that the duties in the afterlife are the same as those of the mundane. Also he suggests that a bureaucratic analogy must have existed in the afterlife to such an extent that the dead could bring cases those who wronged them. He writes “The victims of his evil acts, if any, were or would be citizens of the other world, and they could bring suit seeking redress of their wrongs. In such a case,” Kleeman continues, “the deceased’s living descendants suffered punishment in this world as he (the deceased) was being punished in the other” (Kleeman 1984:5). In this case his view, I believe, is conjecture, in that the presence of surrogate workers in the tomb and labor in the afterlife does not automatically imply post-mortem punishment.

To illustrate this last point an examination of other religious systems is in order. Specifically, the well-documented and thoroughly studied beliefs and practices of ancient Egypt tell us that laboring in the afterlife does not necessarily imply punishment. According to prevalent burial practices before the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2,250-2,000), often servants performed menial labor in the afterlife for the benefit of their wealthy patrons, illustrated by the
practice of landowners surrounding their tombs with the graves of their servants (Sayce 1902:52). Moreover, tomb images, either as statutes or in relief, served as a representation of these helpers to serve their master in the afterlife. After this period the beliefs imply that all, regardless of station in the social hierarchy, had to labor in the afterlife. To overcome this, Egyptians included small figurines of generic servants with the deceased in the tomb to function as impersonators for the spirits of the dead. These figures, called shawabti, original meaning uncertain, later known as ushepti, translated as “answerer” as they answered in the place of the dead when they are called to labor, a function best described by the following passage from the Egyptian Book of the Dead:

Spell to cause the shawabti to perform work for a man in the Netherworld: O shawabti, if So and So is called upon or if I am listed to perform any work that is performed in the Netherworld as a man to carry out his duties, to cultivate the fields, to water the banks (of the river), to transport the sand of the East to the West, 'Present', so shalt thou say (Book of the Dead 6; Cerny 1957:93)

In this context, the Egyptian afterlife and the Han version share some similarities. Poo states that the role of the Han surrogate workers was not to serve the dead but to substitute for the deceased in the underworld of the Han (Poo 1998:172), which is similar to the function of the ushepti. Furthermore, he notes that not only were the dead required to labor in the afterlife, they had to pay taxes in the underworld as well (Poo 1998:171-172), a fate similar to all of the lower echelon of Han society. The use of the Han figurines and the Egyptian ushepti does differ in that the ushepti were found in the graves of the wealthy, while the Han surrogate workers are usually found in poorer tombs, and consequently their inclusion is a good indicator of the class of the deceased (Poo 1998:172).
It is important to note that according to recent interpretations the Egyptian afterlife was not “moral” in nature. Bernstein writes that although the Egyptian afterlife portrayed in the Book of the Dead contains areas for the torment and destruction of specific souls, the dead are segregated according to devotion to or neglect of specific gods and the proper performance of certain rituals. In other words polytheism blurred the issue of the post-mortem treatment of the dead in general, while spell-casting lessened the chance of punishment or labor in the afterlife (Bernstein 1993:18). The presence of a “moral death” in this context is consequently problematic.

Another tantalizing example of potential punishment in the afterlife is found in other grave documents. The first example is found in a text dated to 70 BCE, the Proclaiming Document of Wang Fengshi 王奉世:

The hsin-mao day of the twelfth month, which began on a ping-tzu day, of the forty-seventh year (of the reign of Liu Kuang, King of Kuang-ling, i.e. January 25, 79 BC). The Senior Assistant to the Minister of Works of the Kuang-ling Palace... dares to inform the Lord of the Earth (Tuzhu 士主); Wang Fengshih, a man of Shih-li in Kuang-ling is before the courts 有獄事 (Wenwu 1981 11:17,18; Kleeman 1984:22).

Another grave text, dated to 161 CE, uses the term yushi 獄史 or “jailers” (Seidel 1987a:44). The mere use of the word yu 獄 in this and the above text and the connotations attached to it are significant as it is the second character in the binome diyu 地獄 denoting “Earth-Prisons” which does not appear until several centuries later. By definition, the Chinese term yu is somewhat different from its Western counterpart, as it implies three possible meanings: first, a lawsuit
about criminal and not financial matters; second, a prison; and third, a hall of judgment. The later implies not only a place where the suspects are kept before their trial or in which convicted criminals are imprisoned, but it also implies a place of torture as well (Eberhard 1967:18). Thus, the term by itself encompasses the meaning of both court and prison, significantly different from the Western version. But at this point, the appearance of this term does not entirely imply punishment. I suggest, the dead are not punished here, and that the court-prison complex suggested above is for judging the spirits of the dead, calling them as witnesses for their actions and the immorality of their surviving relatives so the living could be punished.

To illustrate this point we can refer to the another grave-text that is held up as an example of post-mortem punishment. The following is from a grave text dated to 173 CE:

The *chia-shen* day of the twelfth month of the first year of Hsi-ping (January 5, 173). On behalf of Ch'en Ching and his family (?) I erect the... of his tomb, (thus) on behalf of the dead man absolving him of culpability (*jieshi* 解適). I proclaim to the Elder and Sire of the Western Tumulus, the subterranean two-thousand bushel officials, the Lord of the Green Forest, and the King of Wu-yi (Mountain): May the living, ascending, proceed to yang; may the dead, descending, return to yin; may the living proceed to the Lofty Tower; may the dead... hide themselves. The living to the north! The dead to the south! May each follow a different path. Quickly, quickly, in accordance with the statues and ordinances! If (the departed) is good, the Ch'en family will enjoy good fortune and prosper. If (the departed) is evil, five generations will suffer the malefic consequences. Quickly! (Chi Fo-t’uo, *Yi-shu ts’ung-pien*, vol. 5.; Kleeman 1984:23).

What really stands above is the presence of the terms *jieshi* 解適 or *jiezhe* 解譴 implying "absolved" or "released of culpability," leading us to ask, if the dead are to be "absolved of culpability" what are they guilty of? Specifically, are they guilty of violating moral conduct and
are afterward punished for doing so? According to Hansen and others, these grave texts reflect a fear of breaking specific taboos against violating the Earth by digging graves and hence offending the Earth God and other deities associated with the Terrestrial Realms (Hansen 1995:152). For evidence of similar beliefs regarding taboos against violating the Earth, Wang Chong writes the following:

When people build or repair a home or wall, they pierce the earth and dig up land. When the work is completed, they propitiate and ask for pardon from the earth god in a ceremony called appeasing the earth. They make an earthen figure in the shape of a spirit and ask a wizard to invite the figure over to appease the earth god. Once the worshipping is over, they feel happy and glad and say they have propitiated and asked for forgiveness from the ghosts and gods and driven away the bad sprits and dangers (Forke I:535; Hansen 1995:152).

If we take the above into account, it seems that the real impact of violating these taboos, specifically when digging graves, seems to fall on the living. It stands to reason that if the living violated certain taboos, then disaster visited them in the form of the afflictions of the guishen in accord with the beliefs of demonology. In this case then the dead do not personally offend the earth deities, the living are more likely and they are the ones held morally responsible, not only for themselves, but for the dead as well.

In addition, the last segment of the grave ordinance dated to 173 CE suggests that the living are held accountable for the actions of the dead. The passage “If (the departed) is good, the Ch’en clan will enjoy good fortune and prosper; if (the departed) is evil, five generations will suffer the malefic consequences” (Kleeman 1984:23) tells us that moral or immoral actions of the dead results in retribution visited on the living, the living descendants in particular, and in the
case of the Ch’en family, this retribution reaches down five generations. The idea expressed here is one of “collective responsibility” or “collective guilt” as described by Hulsewe and Zürcher (Hulsewe 1955:115ff; Zürcher 1980:135ff). It is not surprising that these ideas possess a mundane counterpart in Qin and Han law. A central idea of judicial process and law during these periods was the idea of family unity and collective responsibility, represented in part by the corvée system, as they, to a large extent, defined culpability. According to the legal system, the Chinese family often encompassed the grandparents, parents, children, sometimes even the relations of parents, and often slaves. In the most heinous of crimes, such as plotting rebellion, counterfeiting, thievery and others, all of these elements were held responsible for the actions of the criminal, and were punished accordingly: together they were often beheaded, strangled, enslaved, and their property was confiscated. Sometimes, according to the severity of the crime, the government punished “three sets of relatives,” a term that might imply the criminal’s parents, brothers, wife, and children, or members of his father’s clan, mother’s clan, and wife’s clan, or it may even imply his father’s sons and grandsons, or his father and father’s brothers and even cousins (Wilbur 1943:74). In addition, the five household mutual responsibility teams fell into defining legal responsibility, entailing not only a responsibility to serve the government, it also served as a legal means to implicate the family of the criminal and even four other families

27The Tanglì shuyì 唐律疏議 illustrates this point for the Tang period: “Those plotting rebellion or major crimes shall be beheaded. Fathers, and sons over sixteen years old, shall be strangled. [Sons] fifteen years old or younger, mothers, daughters, wives and concubines, grandfathers, grandsons, older and younger brothers, older and younger sisters, and such others as pu ch’ü (buqu 部曲 a status between that of a slave and a freeman) [shall be enslaved], and property, fields, and houses shall be confiscated by the government. Men over eighty or incurably sick, women over sixty or incurably sick, shall be excused” (Tanglì shuyì (ca. 653-54) 17; Wilbur 1943:73, n. 1).
as well in the worst case scenarios.

In short, the entire matrix of the afterlife of pre-Buddhist China is profoundly “neutral” in nature. In all, the dead exist in the afterlife without punishment for wrong-doing. During these time periods though the condition of the dead is influenced not by one’s immorality but entirely by status based on the prevailing social hierarchy of the temporal world. This means that those of the upper echelon of society were most likely to ascend to the Heavens and dwell next to Shangdi. If they did not, meaning if all the dead in general dwelled in the Earth or in the tomb, then their condition was determined according to the living’s ability to provide for them, an ability that was indeed more available for the elite. The condition of the common people, on the other hand, carried on in the afterlife, in that they were most likely required to serve their masters in the afterlife. If not, then they managed a lonely, drab existence near or in the tomb.

The developments of the Late Warring States brought about changes in the perception of the cosmos, namely, a growing trend towards a bureaucratic government in the temporal world that influenced the function and structure of the cosmos. Instead of laboring for their own masters in the afterlife, the dead were scrutinized by the administrative offices of the Celestial and Terrestrial realms, and in the end the dead served these same bodies. Despite this, some of the traits of the Shang and Zhou continued. For example, the spirits of the dead of the upper class had greater opportunity to journey to the various realms of paradise due to their access to elaborate and often expensive funerary rituals. Conversely, the spirits of the non-elite had little recourse for a pleasant afterlife in these paradises of the afterlife, save only for a few exceptions: the worship of the Queen Mother of the West, the inclusion of TLV Mirrors, for example. For them, the concerns focused on, in the words of Poo Mu-chou, their daily “personal welfare,” that
is securing benefit and avoiding disaster within their religious worldview. To them, securing the
good graces of their ancestors and a host of deities as well, exorcizing the dangers of the sundry
ghosts and spirits, and lessening any potential danger from the dead by segregating them from the
living are the most important aspects of these practices.

By the later Warring States Period, the bureaucratic analogy emerged as the operative
norm to approach or deal with supernatural or extra-human forces. In this model, the common
people became able to petition or appeal to the various offices of the cosmos, who, among other
things, weighed appeals, allotted the fate of the living, determined the time and date of death,
lorded over the dead, and judged the actions of the living and punished them accordingly by
means of the ghosts and spirits who often acted as agents of retribution. In this system, the
various officials judged the actions of the individual, holding not only him or her responsible but
also the family in accord with the concept of “collective guilt” or “collective responsibility.”
Hence, the corporate body of the living, defined by the family unit, suffer for their own actions or
those of the dead.

Conversely, if there are any punishments in the afterlife, its absence in the sources is
conditioned by numerous factors. First, as the grave-quelling texts more or less concern the
personal needs of the family unit and indirectly attest to their relationship with the deceased, they
are not didactic in nature: even if punishment is present in the afterlife, these texts do not attempt
to warn the living about immorality and its consequences. Also, it stands to reason that the
personal nature of these texts further lessens the chance of naming the deceased as “evil,”
“wicked” or “guilty” as implicating their own relatives in this worldview may imply implicating
themselves. Second, the ubiquitous presence of “collective guilt” so thoroughly diminishes the
impact of individual retribution to a point that it is virtually inconsequential, and, hence, unmentioned if at all present. In short, we may be able to hypothesize its existence, but we are hard-pressed to locate solid evidence to prove that wicked are punished in the afterlife.

Despite this trait, the beliefs of these periods, specifically those of the Qin and Han, are entirely relevant as they provided the framework for later elaborations of the afterlife. The bureaucratic analogy, for example, supplied a solid foundation for judgment, accountability, and potential post-mortem punishment. The use of governmental procedures and terms, such as the judicial function of the Heavens, Earth, and the use of the terms *yu* or “prison,” and the idea of culpability, left a vocabulary used in later periods. In addition, this analogy provided momentum, or at least the potential, for the idea of post-mortem punishment: toiling in the underworld for the government is one such example. But again, the idea of “collective guilt” and the punishment of the wicked living has clouded the issue. If the underworld was not responsible for punishing the wicked dead, then it was responsible for managing the dead and segregating them from the living. Hence, again the idea of *yu* or “prison” comes to mind, which in this context more than likely implies locking up and segregating and not punishment. As will be seen in later chapters, this bureaucratic complex or analogy lent itself fully to later ideas about the afterlife, specifically to those introduced by Buddhism.
Chapter Three: “Moral Death” in Buddhism

I. Introduction:

Buddhism, initially an Indian religion, was introduced to China in the beginning of the Common Era, and it did not become fully established in the Chinese psyche until the later Tang dynasty (617-907). Chinese Buddhists often consider this dynasty as a “Golden Age,” when Buddhism flourished under Imperial patronage and when Buddhist practices became widespread in China. This “Golden Age,” however, stands in contrast to the almost humble introduction of Buddhism itself. During the Han in particular, it received comparatively little attention from the government, while the common people, in general, often confused it with the indigenous religion of China. But, instead of being absorbed entirely into the Chinese religious matrix, and, thereby, losing its identity, Buddhism established a relatively strong foothold in China through the actions of a handful of talented monks, foreigners usually, who dedicated themselves to translating the original Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese. It was their actions that managed to spread the Buddhist message, and, hence, retain its identity.

Suffice to say, numerous factors contributed to the Buddhist success in China. Religion in general thrives in times of strive by offering a sense of comfort and order to the suffering. In this aspect, China and its relationship with Buddhism during the Han and Six Dynasties is no different, as this period is marked by disunity, rebellions, intermittent warfare, and foreign invasions, all which left China divided by geography and different ruling factions.¹ In sum,

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¹ The early period is divided into the Sanguo 三国 or “Three Kingdoms,” which is composed of the Wei 魏 (220-64), the Shu Han 蜀漢 (221-63), and the Wu 吳 (222-80). At this time, China was also ruled by the short-lived Western Jin 西晉 (265-316), and the Sixteen Kingdoms 十六國 (304-439). After 316, China was, in effect, divided in half with the Northern Wei 北魏 (386-534) ruling the North, while the South was ruled by five successive dynasties, specifically the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-419), the Liu Song 劉宋 (420-78), the Southern Qi 南齊 (479-501), the Liang 梁 (502-56), and the Chen 陳 (557-88). These five dynasties combined with the Northern Wei are known as the Six Dynasties, or Liuchao 六朝.
disunity and chaos remained the norm until the Sui (589-617) managed to reunify China under one rule. Buddhism thrived in this context as it offered to China a variety of comparatively new dimensions to function as a complement to China’s own indigenous religious worldview. In particular, the ideas of karma, rebirth, a more systematic portrayal of the afterlife, a cosmos fully stocked with a variety of Paradises and a Netherworld for post-mortem rewards and punishments, among other things, offered to the Chinese a compatible supplement to beliefs held previously. In addition, Buddhism, by the time of its entry into China, was unarguably organized on a scale far greater than any other world religion that existed at that time. It was this quality in particular that made it a worthy competitor to the established state religion of the Chinese.

Among these new innovations, one in particular stands out, that of the idea of “personal morality” or “personal responsibility,” as manifest in the Buddhist concept of karma, rendered ye 業 in Chinese. This chapter argues that concept alone had perhaps the greatest overall influence on the Chinese religious worldview during this period. Specifically, karma offered a newer, simpler, and perhaps more appealing way to explain human suffering, which stands in contrast to the paradigms established in the previous centuries. As already mentioned, human suffering in the Chinese world of the Qin, Han, and earlier was explained as a result from the improper performance of ritual and was doled almost exclusively within the realm of the living by the assorted guishen, “ghosts and spirits.” In addition, moral responsibility in this earlier worldview belonged to tribes, clans, and families and was, hence, “collective.” Karma, on the other, hand, differs substantially from this idea, as it, in simple terms, results directly from individual action or actions and not necessarily those of the group. The real importance of karma, this chapter argues, lies in how it influences one’s condition in the afterlife. In short, it is directly linked to the Buddhist afterlife, because karmic merit, or demerit for that matter, influences one’s potential
rebirth. This aspect, combined with Buddhist views of the afterlife and their post-mortem retributive realms, added momentum to the changes begun in the Qin and Han. In other words, if the movement away from an aristocratic government to one governed by a comparatively more impartial bureaucracy changed the view of the afterlife of the Han and after to one relatively more open to a broader spectrum of society, then the Buddhist idea of “personal morality” or “personal responsibility” would indeed have a greater, if not equal, impact on the fate of the dead. In short, the Chinese afterlife became more and more “moral” in tone because of the newer religious innovations of Buddhism.

II. The Early History of Buddhism in India and China:

Buddhism, like other world religions, possesses a lengthy history steeped in tradition. It goes without saying, that to sum up the history and teachings of Buddhism in the space of a few pages does this tradition a great injustice. For these reasons, the following paragraphs are less of a summary, and more of a focus section. Thus, the following will supply a general overview of the core beliefs of Buddhism, with the most emphasis being placed on elements that did not exist in the Chinese indigenous religious matrix. As a result, points examined below are directly relevant to the Buddhist afterlife. Of the most significant includes Buddhist perceptions of a cosmos governed almost entirely by “morality,” and fairly set of fairly complex religious practices, such as mediation and organized institutions. Once established, the next subsection will examine the introduction of Buddhism to China, meaning the problematic concept of the transmission of Buddhist ideas, or, in particular, what ideas were transmitted to China, how they were transmitted, and by whom. This by any means is no easy task, as the historical records from this period are neither entirely complete, nor reliable, and because such changes were gradual,
they are, hence, difficult to measure.

a.) The Inception of Buddhism in India and Early Core Beliefs:

Buddhism was founded by Gautama Sakyamuni, or Gautama Siddharta (ca. 563-483 BCE), son of the chief of the Sakya tribe located at the foot of the Himalayas. Due to its heritage, Buddhism was not an entirely new or radical religion. In fact, like Christianity's relationship to Judaism, Buddhism owes a lot to the earlier Indian religious tradition, as it emerged out of the Brahminical and Upanishadic traditions, and took with it, among other things, the ideas of rebirth or reincarnation, asceticism, and a complex yet defined view of the cosmos governed by a few key binding principles.

One of these binding aspects is the Buddhist idea of Dharma, rendered fa 法 in Chinese. Dharma, a fairly complex term, implies one's "duty," one's "morality," or even simply the teachings or doctrines of Buddhism itself. As a set of teachings, this aspect is manifest in the Buddha's message itself, expressed orally or in written form. Contained within the teaching or Dharma, too, are several other binding philosophical concepts. According to Buddhism, the cosmos, or everything in existence, past, present, future, seen and unseen, exists or existed because these aspects were preconditioned to exist. As related in the concept of Pratitya-samutpāda, Yuanqi 緣起, or "dependent origination," everything arises and exists dependent on the entire fabric of the cosmos. Everything, in turn, is ultimately conditioned by karma, and bound within Samsāra, Shengsi 生死 or Lunhui 輪迴, the endless cycles of birth and rebirth. The Buddha argued in His sermon on the "Four Noble Truths," defined here as life is suffering, this suffering has a cause, suffering can be overcome, and the way to overcome suffering, that the underlying fundamental principle of existence in the world of Samsāra is suffering. Hence, to overcome this suffering is the ultimate goal of Buddhism, along with attaining a state of Nirvāṇa
or “extinction,” transliterated into the Chinese as Niepan 涅槃. For lack of a simple concise definition, Nirvâna is desirable as it is entirely different from the former, that is, it is without suffering.

The Buddha prescribed numerous ways to avoid suffering and to escape Samsâra. First and foremost, he advocated the fundamental Buddhist precepts the “Eightfold Path,” bazhengdao 八正道, meaning right views, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. The Buddha argued that, in simple terms, human craving or desire holds us to the endless cycles of birth and rebirth. For the perfect environment to maintain release, and, hence eliminate craving, early Buddhism advocated the efficacy of meditation and a detachment from the world. As a result, as far as early Buddhism was concerned, the only practitioners who could accomplish this were ascetics, monks and nuns, who were, in turn, bound together in the sangha, seng 僧, a mutually supporting community, assisted by the laity. Together, these communities practised stilling or calming the mind, through meditative process and attaining a state of reflective repose inspired by religious or philosophical discourse.

Added to this matrix are the Buddhist views of the cosmos, human suffering, and karma. According to the simplest definition, karma implies “behaviour,” “deed,” or “act.” This means that every act or intention has a reciprocal consequence. In accord with Buddhist reasoning, good actions beget good results, evil actions beget misfortune, perhaps in this life, the next, or even in subsequent rebirths. The binding laws of karma, hence, directly reflect elements of “moral death,” or post-mortem punishment, as actions and their responses are reflexive, leading to one being reborn in specific realms or gati, according to previous actions. Buddhism proposed that there are five or six potential rebirths, that as a deva or god, as an Asura or Titan, as a human, as an animal, as a hungry ghost, or as a denizen of the underworld. It should be noted that the
second *gati*, or rebirth as an Asura, is not popular in use in China and is often omitted. In all cases, though, existence in every one of these *gati* is temporary and not eternal. This holds true even for the denizens of the infernal regions, for after being punished there for a specific period, they are ultimately reborn again according to their previous karma.  

To spread this doctrine of salvation the Buddhists relied on a variety of means. Mostly, the chief vehicle of transmission were monks and the laity, who travelled the along the trade routes and spread the Buddha's message by what is identified as “word of mouth,” that is, the verbal communication of the Dharma. In addition, written texts complimented the verbal messages, and were often translated into the native tongue to increase the speed and accuracy of the transmission of ideas. In simple terms, the message of the Buddhists occurred on two levels to appeal to two general levels of society. On a philosophical level, it offered relatively sophisticated messages regarding the nature of human existence and the nature of reality. According to this view, Buddhism considered the infernal regions and the cosmos itself as mental constructs, or in short, a state of mind, and a product of the ignorance that binds the living to the endless cycles of Samsara. In one sense, it is the ultimate reflection of egoism, clinging, and desire, and is, hence, illusion. In this aspect then, contemplation on the infernal regions is a

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2 The early teachings of the Buddha underwent significant changes. Beginning with the first century BCE, Buddhism eventually split in two general branches: those that adhered to the idea that only ascetics could attain salvation, and those that believed that salvation was much broader, meaning that the laity could also attain salvation. In the end, these two groups became known respectively as the Theravada school, the “Teachings of the Elders,” and the Mahayana school, the “Great Vehicle,” Dacheng 大乘, which coined the pejorative term Hinayana or “Small Vehicle,” Xiaocheng 小乘, for the Theravada. In contrast, the Mahayana school possessed a more broad-base appeal, in that it maintained that the laity could attain enlightenment or Buddhahood by a variety of means as embodied in the doctrine of the Bodhisattva. Roughly translated as “future Buddha” or “wisdom being,” the Bodhisattva, a monk or layperson, would forsake Nirvana until all others could cross over. In the interim, they would disseminate the teachings of the Buddha and aid others in their quest for salvation. This aspect, combined with a variety of other means, such as devotion to numerous other divine Bodhisattvas, the use of images of the Buddha, the practice of compassion for other sentient beings, and the adherence to Buddhist precepts, forged Buddhism into a truly universal religion possessed of the salvation of all from the suffering of this world. In turn, this diversity within the tradition itself lent Buddhism great flexibility, thereby allowing it to adapt capably to foreign cultures.
tool for eventual enlightenment, perhaps a vehicle to point out the futile nature of suffering, and little else. On another level, Buddhism intentionally relayed its message on a more fundamental or basic level to appeal to people who were not overly concerned with doctrine and philosophical discourse. In simple terms, the Buddhists used the lure of realms of Paradise and the fear of punishment in the afterlife as simple tools to convert the uninitiated, hence labelled as the “the carrot and the stick” approach. In other words, reliance on portrayals of “hellfire and brimstone texts” are attempts to entice the uninitiated by luring them with the promise of release from suffering or even by threats of torment in the next life. In this function, the infernal regions, in addition to a retributive function, operated as a tool for conversion and a means to regulate one’s morality. In sum, the predominate function of the Buddhist underworld is in line with Bernstein’s “useful” and “moral” deaths, in that it prods the living by the fear of punishment in the afterlife.

b.) The Introduction of Buddhism to China:

Scholars generally believe that Buddhism entered China either through overland routes, via the famous “Silk Road,” and the less popular routes, through upper Burma and into Yunnan in Southwest China, or the Himalayas via Nepal and Tibet. In addition, the message passed through the ocean borne trading routes, by way of Java and the Malay Coast, eventually to South China.

Despite the fact that scholars know how Buddhism entered China, there are numerous theories regarding the date of its introduction. Archeological and reliable textual records place

3 For a discussion of this, see Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga (1972:78-79).

4 Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga talk about this aspect. They mention that the use of the Buddhist “Hell” is one of the “one of the most practical methods of teaching naive and unsophisticated individuals the need to practice virtues” (Matsunaga 1972:viii-ix). In addition, Kalupahana mentions that the Buddhist “Heavens” and “Hells” are for the “religious edification of the uninitiated” and as a “deterrent to immorality” (Kalupahana 1976:65).
the earliest possible contact to the Later Han period. The earliest examples of Buddhist statuary, discovered in Sichuan province 四川 and in areas outside of the Changan 長安, and Luoyang regions 洛陽, then the Han capital, attest to contact that occurred in the Latter Han and Three Kingdoms (Tsukamoto 1985:20). But in what form this manifested itself in is anyone's guess. Evidence of this contact is also bolstered by contemporary historical accounts, of which the most reliable is the "Biography of Prince Liu Ying" 劉英, the life-story of the half-brother of Emperor Ming 明帝 (r. 58-75). This account, dated to 65 CE, records, among other things, the presence of a Buddhist Community in China, specifically in the Eastern reaches of the Chinese Empire in modern-day Jiangsu 江蘇 and Shandong 山東 Provinces. In its description, the text mentions the community of monks and pious laymen who lived in his kingdom, and in receiving compensation for an offense committed by Ying, used these gifts to prepare a vegetarian feast for the members of their community. Despite its brevity, it is significant in that it records the presence of a Buddhist community outside of the capital and away from the Silk Road, attesting that Buddhism was fairly spread out in Han China by the mid first century CE. Still, the text relates little in way of the attempts of the Buddhist to convert the Chinese, or the nature of their message, save for the Buddhist emphasis on vegetarianism. We can assume though that their message was spread by what we can identify as "word of mouth."

Written records of the Buddhist message in China did not come about until a century later with vigorous attempts of translating the Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese. The first to attempt this was the Parthian monk An Shigao 安世高 a Hinayāna monk who arrived in the capital of Luoyang in 148 CE. To his credit, he translated numerous Buddhist texts, specifically those pertaining to dhyāna practices of concentration, meditation, and breath control. At the

5 Summarized from Ch'en 1964:32ff.
most, he is accredited with translating 176 texts into Chinese, but the more conservative number of approximately 30 titles is generally accepted as more accurate (Ch'en 1964:43; Zürcher 1977:202-3; Tsukamoto 1985:77). The next significant translator to follow is the Scythian Lokasema, Zhiloujiachen 支盧迦譯 or Zhichen 支譯, who arrived in Loyang in 167. Belonging to the Mahāyāna school, he is accredited with translating seven substantial texts (Zürcher 1977:202-3), while other sources mention 14 (Tsukamoto 1985:98ff). Unlike An Shigao's translations, most of these texts are related to the Mahāyāna study of prajñā-pāramitā, that is, the “Perfection of Wisdom,” the belief that reality is transcendent and can only be known through intuitive wisdom or prajñā. Another relevant figure is the Sogdian translator and contemporary of Lokasema, Kangju 康巨 (c. 187 CE), who translated several texts, some even related to the structure of the underworld. He is at a disadvantage though, as most of his texts survive as fragments only, and are mentioned in later texts. In all cases though, there seems to be little emphasis placed on translating Buddhist “hellfire and brimstone texts” which became more prominent in the centuries after the Han.

It is of no doubt that the “word of mouth message” of the Buddhist missionaries and the recorded and translated Buddhist texts were successful in relating the transmission of Buddhist concepts, but the full extent of the impact of Buddhism is intensely difficult to gauge at this early period. This results from a variety of reasons. First, texts are composed or related by the elite of a tradition and were best understood by the educated elite of a society and not entirely by the illiterate of the popular level. So, this leads to the conclusion that the reading audience wasn’t very extensive. In addition, the influences of the “word of mouth message” are arguably almost impossible to measure, a fact that corresponds to a lack of mention in the sources: no sources record a monk or layperson proselytizing. Second, any impact may have been lessened by the
view of the Chinese themselves. It has been argued that the Chinese of the Han and later probably viewed Buddhism as novel, or at least strange. Monks, for example, by nature, renounce the family and procreation in general. According to the Chinese traditional view of the family, one had to produce offspring to be filial, and for this reason the idea of celibacy was antithetical in the Chinese worldview. Furthermore, as Buddhism was initially a foreign or even alien religion, it may have had difficulty in securing official Imperial patronage, which they certainly required to flourish on a significant level. Given the chaotic situation after the Han, this patronage may have been slow in coming on a consistent level.\(^6\) Compounded with these factors, it has been argued that the Chinese probably confused the Buddhist monks with the religious practitioners of the indigenous Chinese religious practitioners, meaning the shamans, the exorcists and the Taoist practitioners of longevity or immortality techniques (Ch'en 1964:44ff; Maspero 1981:258; Tsukamoto 1985:115). This is understandable given the nature of popular religious beliefs. As mentioned previously, adherents to the popular religious matrix are not overly concerned with subtle doctrinal differences. Instead, popular religion or the beliefs of the non-elite were, more often than not, pragmatic in nature and hence concerned more with the most efficacious methods of solving a dilemma and securing personal welfare. For the common people, any distinction between religious traditions is, for the most part, irrelevant, as they often adopted beliefs that were immediately advantageous or convenient. Given the moral nature of the Buddhist cosmos, it is understandable that these ideas possessed a certain appeal, and were adopted by this matrix. It provided newer solutions to the fundamental questions regarding the

\(^6\) In obtaining state-sponsorship, Buddhism was relatively successful in the chaotic period between the Han and the Sui. During the Eastern Jin, meaning the Southern Chinese Court, as opposed to the Northern non-Chinese, the Buddhist community even asserted its own independence from secular authority. In the North, by contrast, Buddhism, some scholars have argued, became a vehicle to serve the state. Intermittent warfare, however, made Buddhism's position vary during these centuries. For a discussion of this topic refer to Ch'en (1964:57ff).
afterlife, human suffering, and retributive punishment, as manifest in the ideas of karma and a "moral death." Given these factors, it is understandable that Buddhism and its message of a "moral death" penetrated China on a substantial level, but to what extent is not readily discernable.

III. Buddhist Cosmology:

The following section is less concerned with measuring the impact of Indian Buddhism, but more with the structure of its cosmos as related in Buddhist texts and ideas directly imported into China. It is not, in addition, concerned with the realm of "praxis," that is the ritual maintenance of the "solidarity between the living and the dead." The latter is covered in the next section.

In general terms, the Indian Buddhist view of the cosmos is different from the previous indigenous view of the Chinese in several aspects. First, right from its inception, the Buddhist cosmos was populated with a variety of different Paradises and infernal regions. In essence, the entire Buddhist view is more systematic and detailed in comparison to the previous Chinese abodes of the dead, meaning life with Shangdi in the Heaven, or existence in the Yellow Springs, or in a subterranean realm under the jurisdiction of various bureaucratic deities, or even existence as a disembodied spirit. Second, the Indian Buddhist view of the cosmos differed from the previous in that it was driven by more moralistic concerns than by the proper performance of ritual. According to the Buddhist view, one's immorality or morality influenced one's rebirth, which could be, if one was wicked, as an animal, a hungry ghost, or as a denizen of the underworld. The wicked, too, could be reborn as a human, but in this case, lame, deaf or mute. It is important to note that regardless of the condition, retributive punishment was not at all
permanent: when one finished existence in this state, he or she was recycled through Samsara, and, hence, reborn according to the most appropriate gati. In this aspect, it functions less as a “simple storehouse for the dead” and more like the other examples of a “moral death” supplied by Bernstein, in that these realms punished the wicked and possessed the punitive function of motivating the living to attain a state of moral betterment.

To illustrate these portrayals of the Buddhist underworld, the following section will examine the Indian Buddhist structure of the cosmos as a whole. Once established, the third subsection will examine the Buddhist idea of post-mortem retribution, the implications of the Buddhist “moral death,” post-mortem retributive justice, and how the Buddhist underworld processed the dead. This will be accomplished by the examination of several texts that were translated into Chinese during the period between the Han and Six Dynasties. The nature of these texts will be discussed later. In the end, this section will establish the almost overriding “moral” nature of the Buddhist cosmos.

a.) The Structure of the Buddhist Cosmos:

In general, the earliest Indian-Buddhist accounts of the cosmos are fairly simple, as the Buddha did not elaborate on the details surrounding its structure. The Pali Canon, the first written texts of the Buddhist Canon, recorded in the first or second centuries BCE (Robinson 1982:39), devotes little effort to describing the underworld. The later Abhidharma tradition, first appearing centuries after the death of the Buddha, presented more detailed accounts of the cosmos in general. The term Abhidharma refers to the third basket of the Pali Tripitaka, the first being the Vinaya, or “Monastic Discipline,” and the second, the Sutra or “Discourses of the Buddha.” Abhidharma Buddhism marked a conscious attempt to gather various abstract terms
expounded by the Buddha and explain them in a more systematic and clear manner. As a result, while the Buddhist descriptions of the cosmos seem sparse in detail, the later Abhidharma portrayals are rich in detail as it supplied descriptions of the cosmos with geographical location, width, depth and other exact specifications. In turn, the Mahāyāna tradition, being more flexible and popular in its approach, adopted ideas expressed in Abhidharma Buddhism, expanded them, and produced a more detailed model of the cosmos far more complicated than the earliest discourses.

At first glance, the earliest portrayals of the Buddhist cosmos are structured according to two paradigms. First, the overall Buddhist cosmos is divided into the *triloka*, the “three worlds” or the Buddhist trichiliosmosm, rendered *Sanjie* 三界 in Chinese. These realms consisted of, first, *kāmadhātu* or *yujie* 欲界, the illusionary impermanent world or the “world of sensual desire,” second, the *rūpadhātu* or *sejie* 色界, a “realm of form” full of things mystical and wonderful, and, third, the *arūpadhātu* or *wujie* 無界, the “formless realm of pure spirit,” a place beyond definition and one where the mind dwells in contemplation (Soothill and Hodous:70). All three realms are still outside the realm of Nirvāṇa, while the latter two realms are more concerned with advanced stages of Buddhist meditation. The last realm, the “world of sensual desire,” comprises the mundane realm which is composed of the five or six gati or potential realms of rebirth, rebirth as a Deva, Titan or Asura, Human, Hungry Ghost, Animal, or as a Denizen of the underworld: the *Deva-gati* or *Tianqu* 天趣, *Asura-gati*, *Axiuluoqu* 阿修羅趣, *Manusya-gati* or *Renqu* 人趣, *Tiragyoni-gati* or *Xuqu* 畜趣, *Preta-gati* or *Egiqu* 餓鬼趣, and *Naraka-gati* or *Diyuqu* 地獄趣, respectively (Soothill and Hodous:138). All of these potential

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7 From Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga (1972:43ff). This section offers an excellent summary of beliefs presented by Abhidharma Buddhism.
destinations, it should be noted are influenced by the moral implications of karma.

Abhidharma Buddhism portrays the mundane realm or kāmadhātu, the realm of sensual desire, in rich detail and complexity. At its centre is Mt. Meru or Sumeru, Sumilou 須彌樓, which is equated to the highest peaks of the Himalayas. In size, the mountain is immense, and in function, it acts as the axis-mundi for this realm, connecting itself with numerous other areas on the horizontal plane, including the sun and the moon, and the four continents of the Buddhist world. Around these aspects lay a series of alternating rings of mountains ranges and oceans, which, in turn, is ultimately enclosed by the Chakravāla range, the Lunweishan 輪圍山, a circular mountain range of iron. Mount Sumeru also connects numerous other abodes that existed in the vertical plane. Starting at the bottom, the infernal regions, which according to various interpretations, are often placed deep below the continent of India. In other texts, the position varies, as it may appear inside Mt. Meru or Sumeru, underneath it, on it, beside it, or even some distance from it. Furthermore, other versions position these realms under the great sea which supports the four continents, while others place it at the edge of sūnyatā, kong 空, or “emptiness.” Next, the various abodes for the Asuras, the Hindu Titans, are found beneath Sumeru and above the infernal regions. Above these abodes and situated on Sumeru are the heavenly Paradises for the various devas. On top of this are the chariots for the sun, the moon, and the stars, while at the peak are numerous abodes for other deities of higher rank, some originally from the Hindu pantheon. In all, everything contained within the Chakravāla mountain range comprised the mundane realm. Those reborn as an animal, or hungry ghosts do not possess a distinct abode as exist within the realm of humans. The denizens of the underworld, in contrast,

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8 This view of the Buddhist cosmos is summarized from L. de la Vallée Poussin, "Cosmogony and Cosmology (Buddhist)," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 4. Ed. by James Hastings (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), pp. 129ff.
are locked up in the underworld.

b.) The Buddhist Underworld:

The development of the Indian Buddhist underworld followed changes in the Buddhist tradition. That is to say, the earliest portrayals of the underworld appear simple in its construction, and later the Abhidharma tradition expanded these ideas, thereby, providing the Mahāyāna view of the underworld with great personality. By the time Buddhism reached China, Buddhism already possessed a detailed and elaborate model of the underworld, which continued to be refined as the centuries progressed. In turn, Indian Buddhism exported newer elaborations of the afterlife to China.

Centuries before the advent of Buddhism, the Indian tradition already possessed a functioning underworld with realms concerned with post-mortem punishment. The oldest possible reference occurs in the Rig Veda (mid second millennium BCE), which, according to modern interpretations, portrays the underworld as a dark pit or stygian abyss, and a place to destroy the wicked, perhaps the enemies of various deities, that is, demons, sorcerers and conspirators (Matsunaga 1972:13-14). After centuries of continuous refinement within the Indian context, Buddhism adopted these paradigms regarding the underworld and post-mortem punishment as they developed.

In general, early Indian Buddhist cosmology identified the subterranean realms as either Naraka, or as Niraya. The first term, Naraka, originally refers to the son of two deities, and later the name of a demon (Monier-Williams 1990:529). It is quite possible that, much like the Hades of the Greek pantheon, Naraka came to personify the underworld in general, which later came to

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9 One of the most concise summaries of the development of the underworld expressed in the Vedic and Upanishad traditions is found in the Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga (1972:13ff).
imply a realm for post-mortem punishment. So, Naraka’s personality, like that of Hades disappeared from the stage. In contrast, the Sanskrit term Niraya is more specific, in that it implies a condition and not location, a state “without happiness” (Monier-Williams 1990:553).

Regardless of what term was used, it is apparent that the Chinese, specifically, the literate elite of the Chinese Buddhist tradition, were well aware of the Indian origins of these terms. Rendering Naraka as Naluojia 納落迦 and Niraya as Niliye 泥犁邪, or simply Nili 泥犁, the Chinese took these concepts and freely adopted them into their worldview. The words, as rendered in Chinese, are mere transliterations of Sanskrit terms and each character in these Chinese terms relates nothing of the original Sanskrit meaning. Several centuries into the Common Era, the terms themselves began to become less popular in use and were ultimately replaced by the Chinese term Diyu 地獄 or “Earth-Prisons.”

In any event, the earliest Buddhist interpretations of the underworld before their import to China were fairly simple, straight-forward, and not overly emphasised in the Buddha’s teachings.

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10 The centrality of Niraya in Chinese Buddhist cosmology is, however, temporary as is Naraka’s. The latter of the two is rarely mentioned at all in China, while in other and later texts translated into Chinese, the number of levels in Niraya differ, and even possess different names. In other versions, Niraya functions as a subdivision of the infernal regions only. The Foshuo si nili jing 佛陀說四泥犁經, the “Sūtra of the Buddha’s Discourse on the Four Niraya” (E. Jin; T. 139) mentions only four divisions, while the Foshuo nili jing 佛陀說泥犁經, the “Sūtra of the Buddha’s Discourse on Niraya” (E. Jin; T. 186) mentions only two, the first, the Tiecheng da nili 鐵城大泥犁經, the “Iron Enclosure of the Great Niraya” and, the second, the Yanluo wang suo xia ba da diyu 阎羅王所轄八大地獄, the “Eight Great Earth-Prisons where King Yama Governs.” These two levels are also subdivided. In a similar vein, the Daluotan jing 大樓炭經, the “Sūtra of the Great Pile of Embers” (E. Jin; T. 123), describes Niraya as having eight levels, each subdivided into 16, making a total of 128 levels. In addition, to these levels, Niraya is placed alongside another division of the underworld, the aforementioned “Ten Great Earth-Prisons of King Yama,” which contains ten levels. In all, the total of levels in this interpretation of the infernal regions is 218, by far, much more complex than the earliest examples.

11 In contrast, it seems that the term Diyu or “Earth-Prisons,” by far the most common term in the Chinese vocabulary after the introduction of Buddhism regarding the underworld, does not possess an Indian origin. It may well be, in fact, a word invented by the Chinese as it relates the position and function of the infernal realms. To illustrate this, the Fayuan zhulin 法苑珠林, the “Forest of Pearls in the Dharma Garden” (T. 2122), the Buddhist encyclopaedia composed by Daoshi 道世 (d. 683), records the Indian origin of the two terms as in line with their Sanskrit antecedents. It even directly mentions the Indian origin of the term, but does not mention one for Diyu. This may imply that Diyu is purely a Chinese elaboration based on Chinese ideas of death, the punishment of sins, and underworld officials. Passages found in Fayuan zhulin.7; Huiming bu.2 會名部第二 :322.
In the earliest discourses attributed to the Buddha, specifically those related in the Pali Canon, the underworld is briefly mentioned in only three collections of texts, and not in substantial detail. These texts, among other things, record that the guilty are first interrogated by the Indian or Buddhist Lord of the Dead, Lord Yama, and following this interrogation they are sent to the appropriate post-mortem areas for punishment. These are, however, the most substantial descriptions of the Buddhist underworld from the earliest Buddhist texts. Given the length of this Sutra, which encompasses five substantial volumes rendered into English, the role of the underworld at this stage does not appear significant or central to the Buddhist early teachings.

Regardless of the shape of the earliest Buddhist versions, we do not know precisely when the Buddhist perception of the underworld was first introduced to China or how it was portrayed. We can surmise that the early Buddhist missionaries at least mentioned the underworld during this period, but we do not know how they described it, or what emphasis they placed on it. The early translators of the Han, however, did not devote a lot of their efforts to translating Buddhist “hellfire and brimstone” texts. Xiao states that there are three Han texts devoted to the underworld: the Foshuo shiba nilijing, the “Sutra on the Buddha’s Discourse on the Eighteen Niraya” (T. 731), the Foshuo zuiyebiao jiaohua diyu ing. The three are the Suttā-Nipāta, the “Collection of Sūtras,” the Anguttara Nikāya, the “Collection of Item-More Discourses,” and the Samyutta Nikāya, the “Collection of Connected Discourses.” The Anguttara-Nikāya, the “Collection of Item-More Discourses,” one of the first recorded Buddhist texts, dated to the second or first centuries BCE, records the following divisions: 1.) Abbuda; 2.) Nirabbuda; 3.) Ababa; 4.) Ahaa; 5.) Atata; 6.) Kumuda (Yellow Lotus); 7.) Sogandhika (White Water Lily); 8.) Uppalaka (Blue Lotus); 8.) Pundarika (White Lotus); and 10.) Paduma (Red Lotus). From Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga (1971:41 and 140, note 33). The significance of these names is hard to recognize: some scholars state that these terms represent time-spans, or they may be the transliterations of the sounds of lamentation (Matsunaga 1972:41; Woodward 1996:116, note 1.). This may be the case for the last five, but the first set corresponds to the names of the later Buddhist Cold infernal regions, names that mimic the sound of chattering teeth.

12 The three are the Suttā-Nipāta, the “Collection of Sūtras,” the Anguttara Nikāya, the “Collection of Item-More Discourses,” and the Samyutta Nikāya, the “Collection of Connected Discourses.” The Anguttara-Nikāya, the “Collection of Item-More Discourses,” one of the first recorded Buddhist texts, dated to the second or first centuries BCE, records the following divisions: 1.) Abbuda; 2.) Nirabbuda; 3.) Ababa; 4.) Ahaa; 5.) Atata; 6.) Kumuda (Yellow Lotus); 7.) Sogandhika (White Water Lily); 8.) Uppalaka (Blue Lotus); 8.) Pundarika (White Lotus); and 10.) Paduma (Red Lotus). From Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga (1971:41 and 140, note 33). The significance of these names is hard to recognize: some scholars state that these terms represent time-spans, or they may be the transliterations of the sounds of lamentation (Matsunaga 1972:41; Woodward 1996:116, note 1.). This may be the case for the last five, but the first set corresponds to the names of the later Buddhist Cold infernal regions, names that mimic the sound of chattering teeth.

The "Sūtra on the Buddha’s Discourse on the Retributive Aspects of Guilty Karma Bringing One to Diyu," (T. 724), the Wen diyu jing 間地獄經, the "Sūtra of Questions Regarding the Earth-Prisons," found in the later Jinglu yixiang 經律異相, “Different Aspects of the Sūtra and Vinaya” of the sixth century (T. 2121), and the Daoxing banruo jing 道行般若經, the “Sūtra of the Way and Practice of Prajñā-pāramitā” (T. 224) (Xiao 1989:65).

An examination of the above texts is needed to understand what message concerning the underworld circulated in the late Han. First, scholars such as Swann Goodrich (1981) and Xiao Dengfu (1989) maintain that An Shigao and others did indeed focus on “hellfire and brimstone” texts, stating that the first substantial Buddhist account of the underworld is the “Buddha’s Discourse of the Eighteen Niraya,” a text traditionally believed to be translated during the Later Han by An Shigao (Swann Goodrich 1981: 69; Xiao 1989:65;175). This date may not be accurate. Zürcher (1977) and Tsukamoto (1985), for example, do not mention this text as an authentic Han text, leading us to surmise that it was most likely translated by another and at a later date. In short, it is most likely a forgery, most likely from a period before the Sui, and definitely not the Han. The same holds true for the “Sūtra of the Buddha’s Discourse of the Retributive Aspects of Guilty Karma Bringing One to Diyu,” in that it does not date to the Han.14

The “Sūtra of Questions on Diyu,” translated by Kangju, another text attributed to the late Han, lists two versions of the underworld: one of 18 levels and one of 64. This text, however, has its own problems: it is fragmentary and is later cited in the encyclopaedia “Different Aspects of the Sūtras and Vinaya,” attributed to Baochang 寶唱 (c. 516). As such, it may not be entirely reliable. It may reflect views of Baochang, that is those views of the sixth century and not the

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14 Zürcher (1977, 1980) and Tsukamoto (1985) include a list of accepted Han texts. It includes the following: T. 13, 14, 31, 32, 36, 48, 57, 98, 105, 109, 112, 150, 184, 196, 224, 280, 322, 343, 350, 418, 458, 602, 603, 605, 607, 624, 626, 792, 807, 1508 (Zürcher 1980: 97: n. 14). The Foshuo shiba nili jing does not appear in the list and neither does the Foshuo zuyiye yingbao jiaohua jing.
Han. In any event, it merely lists the different levels of the underworld, and does not describe how the wicked are punished there.

This leaves us with the *Daoxing banruo jing*, the “Way and Practice of Prajnā-pāramitā,” attributed to Lokasema, which according to Zürcher and Tsukamoto is an authentic Han text. However, his text, translated in the year 197 CE, makes only scant reference to Niraya in the section entitled *Nili pin*, “Aspects of Niraya.” It is significant to note as it is not a “hell-fire and brimstone” text, as it is more concerned with the doctrine of prajnā-pāramitā, and the presence of Niraya is secondary. For example, the most significant passage is as follows:

The Buddha said “As for the profound prajnā-pāramitā, there are those who have indeed disregarded it, cast it away, and are unwilling to listen to it. Why is this? These people in a previous existence had occasion to hear of the profound prajnā-pāramitā. The reason is because (at that time) they disregarded it and cast it away. Indeed, they do not have the intention (to learn it). They all do not understand the results of sin, and so they sin. This is what sins bring about. If one hears of the profound prajnā-pāramitā and repeatedly tries to stop others from being able to speak of it, then those who stop prajnā-pāramitā, stop sarvajna. Those who stop sarvajna, stop the Buddha of the past, (the Buddha of) what will come, and (the Buddha of) the present. This is because they disrupt the Dharma and thus sin. Upon death, they enter into the Big Niraya for 100,000’s of years. Through 100,100,000’s of years it is as if they had been rotated through scores of other Niraya, and there all receive various poisons and pain which are indescribable. If in the midst of these their lives come to an end, they are reborn into another section of *Maha-Niraya* (Great Niraya). When their lives again come to an end, their life there is extended and they are reborn into the midst of another area of

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15 The date of this text has not been established with certainty. It is not included in Zürcher's list of authentic Han texts. Teiser, however, believes it to date to the late Han. For a discussion of this, see Teiser (1988:180).

16 *Sarvajna*, or *Sayunruo* 蘆芸若 in Chinese, is the same complete omniscient knowledge as the Buddha (Soothill and Hodous:468).
Obviously, the primary function of Niraya here is that as a place to punish those who do not listen to the Buddha's teachings and try to impede the dissemination of the Mahāyāna ideal of prajñā-pāramitā. Missing in this text are the elaborate enumerations of the various levels of the underworld and the punishments associated with each level, an aspect which begins to appear later in texts translated after the Han.

After the Eastern Jin Dynasty, a more “orthodox” pattern of the underworld emerged, adhering to three general paradigms. In turn, this model became perhaps the most common Buddhist representation of the underworld before the advent of the one present in “The Scripture on the Ten Kings.” The first category consists of the Genben Diyu 根本地獄, the “Central or Radial Earth-Prisons.” These prisons generally possess eight, usually hot, levels, and are alternately named the Ba Da Diyu 八大地獄, the “Eight Great Earth-Prisons.” The “Eight Great” or “Hot Earth-Prisons” usually measure 20,000 yojanas in height and width and are situated deep under the Earth. These levels are usually composed of the following with each level placed vertically, with the more horrific punishments found in the deeper levels. They are as follows: 1.) Samjīva, Denghuo 順活, or Genghuo 更活, “Many Lives” or “Successive Lives,” where one, after enduring numerous sufferings, is returned to life; 2.) Kālāsūtra, Heisheng 黑絞, “Black Rope,” where the sufferer is bound in chains and chopped to pieces; 3.) Samghâta Xianhe 線合, Zhonghe 衆合, or Duiya 堆壓, “the Crowded Earth-Prison,” where one is tortured and large mountains fall on the suffering; 4.) Raurava, Haojiao 嚎叫, Huhu 呼呼, or Huhuan 呼喚, “Wailing”; 5.) Mahāaurava, Dajiao 大叫, Dahao 大號, Dahu 大呼, “Great Screaming”; 6.)

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17 According to Soothill and Hodous, a yojana, youxun 由旬, a Hindu term, is defined as in ancient times as a royal day's march for an army, or also as 40, 30, or 16 Chinese 里 (Soothill and Hodous:197).
Tapana, Yanre 炎熱, Shaozhi 燒炙, “Flames and Burning”; 7.) Pratāpana, Da-re 大熱,
Dashaozhi 大燃炙, Dayanre 大炎熱, “Great Burning Heat”; and 8.) Avīci, Abi 阿鼻, or Wujian
無間, Hebizhi 河鼻旨, Aweiyuezhi 阿惟越致, Apizhi 阿毗致, and Api 阿毗
“Unintermittent Suffering.” Being the deepest level, Avīci is by far the cruelest level of all the
Earth-Prisons. There, sinners die and are reborn to suffer without interval.18

This category is also composed of the Bahan Diyu 八寒地獄, the “Eight Cold Earth-
Prisons.” Most of these correspond to the ten levels as expressed earlier in the Pali Anguttara-
Nikāya. They are as follows: 1.) Arbuda, Efutuo 頭浮陀, where the cold causes blisters; 2.)
Nirabuda, Nicibutuo 尼刺部陀, a place colder still, where the cold causes the blisters to burst;
3.) Atata, Azhazha 阿吒吒, named after the only sound possible from frozen lips; 4.) Hahava or
Apapa, Apopo 阿波波, a condition so cold no sound can be uttered; 5.) Hāhādhana or Huhuva,
Huhupo 虎湖婆, so cold only this sound can be uttered; 6.) Utpala, Youboluo 優鉛羅, or
Nilotpana Niluowu 泥羅烏, where the skin is frozen like blue lotus buds; 7.) Padma, Botemo 菲特摩, where the skin is frozen and bursts open like red lotus buds; and 8.) Mahāpadma,
Mohebotemo 摩訶鉛特摩, where the skin opens as above, but like larger lotus buds.19

In addition to the “Central or Radial Earth-Prisons,” is the second category, composed of
two additional types of Earth-Prisons. The first of these two are the Jinbian Diyu 進邊地獄, the
“Adjacent Earth-Prisons,” also known as the Shiliu Youzeng Diyu 十六遊增地獄, the
“Sixteen Progressive Earth-Prisons,” or the Shiliu Xiao Diyu 十六小地獄, the “Sixteen Minor
Earth-Prisons.” To elaborate, each level of the “Eight Great or Hot Earth-Prisons” possessed a
gate on each side, which opened up to an area that included four additional gates or entrances to

18 The above section is a composite of Soothill and Hodous (207-8), and Ding Fubao (1974:1066ff).

19 Again, this section is a summary from Soothill and Hodous (207-8) and Ding Fubao (1974:1066ff).
the “Adjacent Earth-Prisons.” In all, the addition of these areas makes the total number of retributive realms in this model is 136 (Soothill and Hodous: 207-208).

The third and last category of Earth-Prisons is identified as the Lokântarika, the Gudu 孤獨, the “Isolated Earth-Prisons” or “Solitary Earth-Prisons,” which are sometimes identified as synonyms for the “Adjacent Earth-Prisons” (Xiao 1989: 72). If not implying the “Sixteen Minor Earth-Prisons,” the location of the “Solitary Earth-Prisons” is entirely problematic. Abhidharma literature translated in the Tang states that of these specific Earth-Prisons “there may be many, or maybe two, or maybe just one. There are many kinds (of these Earth-Prisons) and where they are located is not settled. They may be in the Jiang Qing River, the Yellow River, in the Mountains, or in the bordering Wilderness. Or maybe they are in an empty space Under-the-Earth, or in another place.” In any event, the “Solitary Earth-Prisons” more or less attest to the general structure of the Buddhist underworld, in that it is vast, subject to change, and consequently hard to pin down.

c.) The Condition of the “Wicked Dead” in the Buddhist Underworld:

Obviously, the sheer number of variants prohibits examination of all the various Buddhist Earth-Prisons. But, to establish a feel for the Buddhist underworld and the condition of the dead there, we will examine several examples of the Buddhist underworld prevalent in the period between the Han and the Six Dynasties, and put them together to make a composite picture of early Chinese Buddhist beliefs of the underworld. The first text is the previously mentioned Jinglu yixiang, the “Different Aspects of the Sûtra and Vinaya,” of the sixth century, which

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20 Apidamo jushelun juan dishiyi阿毘達磨俱舍論卷第十一; Abhidharma-kosā-sāstra, “Abhidharma Treasury” (T. 1558: 59). This text is translated to the Chinese by Xuan Zang 玄奘 (596-664). This passage mentioned in Xiao (1989:199ff).
records the function of the Indian and Buddhist Lord of the Dead, King Yama, who is responsible for the wicked dead in the infernal regions. It is significant as it records passages attributed to the *Wen diyu jing*, the “Sūtra of Questions Regarding Diyu,” attributed to Kangju of the second century CE, which is possibly one of the earliest texts in China that mentions the underworld and the role of Yama in the afterlife. After examining this, we will then turn to the *Zhengfa nianchu jing* 正法念處經, the “Sūtra of the Remembrance of the True Law” (T. 721), translated by Gautama Prajñāruci, Banruoliuzhi 般若 流支 (early sixth c. CE). It is useful as it conveniently lists the various levels and their relationships to the various transgressions committed by the inhabitants. Once established, we will turn to the *Foshuo guan Fo sanmeihai jing* 佛說觀佛三昧海 經, the “Sūtra of the Buddha's Discourse on Contemplating the Buddhist Ocean of Samadhi,” (T. 643) translated by the Mahāyāna monk Buddhahtradra (359-429), Fotuobatuoluo 佛陀跋陀羅, of Kapilavastu. The text is interesting to note because it portrays not only the structure of the underworld, but also because it dwells on the punishments inflicted on the guilty. In this aspect, it is particularly gruesome. In all, these texts will provide us with possibly the most common model of the Buddhist underworld in circulation between the Han and Six Dynasties.

In the Indian Brahminical and Upanishadic tradition, and in Indian and Chinese Buddhism, Lord Yama, Yanluo Wang 闍羅王, presides over the wicked dead. His career, it should be noted, began early within the early Vedic matrix (mid Second Millennium BCE) and gradually changed over the centuries. The Vedas record that initially he was the offspring of the Sun, and had a sister named Yamī or Yamuna, who herself later became the judge of female culprits. Together these two formed the first pair of human beings (Soothill and Hodous:452). Initially, at least, he is not associated with the underworld and the punishment of the wicked dead. For example, the Vedas refer to him as the “First Ancestor” and that he lived in the
"Shining Heavens of the Fathers," a place where the poets aspired to ascend (Matsunaga 1972:14-15). By the time of the Hindu *Mahābhārata* (composed between ca. 500 BCE and 300 CE), Yama's position began to change, and in this text he received the title *Dharmaraja*, the "King of Dharma," or the "King of Justice." In this role he is portrayed as a "fearful chastiser of the wicked, often with the grim appearance of a dark green complexion with red eyes and dressed in black and red garments" (Matsunaga 1972:20). From his early role as the *Dharmaraja*, his position changed to one resembling that of a grand inquisitor and enforcer of the Dharma.

The early "*Sūtra of Questions on Diyu*" records the accession of Yama to the status of Lord of the Dead. The text states that Yama, once the King of Vaisali of North Eastern India, was initially a fierce general. Perhaps out of a lack of challenge on the field of battle, or even out of boredom, Yama vowed to take on a new responsibility, that of administrating the dead. Together with their King, his generals took the same vow along with his entire army:

Long ago, King Yama was the King of Vaiśali.21 It came to pass that after he and the first King of Weituo (維陀)22 waged war against each other, that the strength of his army was without equal. This caused him to vow that he desired to be the Lord of *Diyu*. His Eighteen Generals led an army of 100,000,000, who had horns for ears and were full of fury and hate. All of these people, together, took this vow "Hereafter, we will serve in administrating the guilty." Presently, this same King of Vaiśali is King Yama, and these Eighteen People (his generals) became the lesser kings of the region,23 while the army of 100,000,000 became the "Ox-Headed-Torturers" (Apang 阿旁)24 of this region and they serve the Celestial

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21 Vaiśali is formerly a kingdom in North East India.

22 This place name is undefined as there is no mention of it in Soothill and Hodous. Also, the term is not mentioned in Ding Fubao (1974), and Mochizuki (1954).

23 The number eighteen refers to a version of the underworld that contains eighteen regions presented in this text.

24 Soothill and Hodous:285.
King of the Northern Reaches beyond the Gate of Vaiśali (Yanluo wang deng wei yusi wangyuan) "The Various Accounts of How King Yama became the Officer of (Di)Yu": Jinglu yixiang 19.258).

Having taken on this position, Yama then ruled the wicked dead from a Palace inside a large mountain positioned South of the Indian continent. Despite the fact that he was responsible for the dead in his realm, his power was not at all absolute, nor was his own condition pleasant by any means. Every day, three times a day, he was punished for his previous wrong-doing as a general by "large gaolers" who pried open his mouth and poured molten copper down his throat, so that "from his throat down, there is nothing untouched and nothing unscalded."25 Given his own punishments, it is apparent that all, including the various deities themselves, are governed by the ubiquitous moral law of Dharma. In a similar vein, Yama's position over the dead also relies on Dharma in that he is not entirely a judge of the wicked dead in this context. Rather, he is an inquisitor, and it seems his only function was to remind the dead that it was ultimately their own personal duty to maintain a virtuous life. Namely, when the dead first come to the Buddhist underworld, he greets them and then reveals the ignorance of the wicked because they did not observe the "Three Divine Messengers," old age, sickness, and death, the same sights witnessed by Sakyamuni Buddha before he renounced the world and embarked on his own path as an ascetic. The Jinglu yixiang also records the following reception of the dead in the underworld, a

25 The Jinglu yixiang jing states "In the South of Jambudvipa (India) there is a great diamond mountain, and inside it is the Palace of King Yama, which are as broad as 6,000 yojanas. Three times a day, a great cauldron (of molten) bronze appears of itself in front (of Yama). When the cauldron arrives in the Palace precincts, King Yama sees it and is terrified, and so he tries to ignore it by going outside of the Palace. When the cauldron goes outside of the Palace, then King Yama goes inside. Then large gaolers bring the hot cauldron up to the prone King Yama, and, using hooks to pry open his mouth, pour the molten bronze into his mouth: from his throat down, there is nothing untouched and nothing unscalded. When this affair is over, he returns to enjoy the pleasures of his harem. In receiving punishment together, the various Great Ministers (of the underworld) indeed experience the same" (Yanluo wang sanshi shouku) "King Yama's Receiving Punishments Three Times (a Day)": Jinglu yixiang 19, p. 258).
tale that is also presented in the Pali *Anguttara Nikāya*:26

There are “Three Messengers” (*san shi 三使*)27: the first is old age, the second sickness, and the third death. If there are those among living creatures who have committed the three types of bad karma (of deed, word, and thought), then these people at the end of their lives appropriately fall into the Earth-Prisons. King Yama then interrogates them: “Were you summoned by the Celestial Messengers?” King Yama states: “Did you see the First Messenger or not? While you lived as a person, you witnessed hair turning white, teeth falling out, eyesight growing dim, skin becoming loose, flesh wrinkling, backs bending so to require a cane, and all the moaning and groaning as this went on. So did you see (the work of) this messenger or not?” The culprit states “I saw him.” (Yama states:) “How could you not realize that you would be like this?” (The culprit replies) “At that time, I was lax, and did not realize this.” King Yama states “Now, I appropriately order you to undergo the suffering (brought about by) your sloth and the knowledge that you went against your father, mother, older brother, younger brother, the “Celestial Ruler” (天帝)28 and the ancestors, and the knowledge that you have wronged (the Buddha’s) servants and the monks. You yourself made this evil, and now it is appropriate that you receive (punishment). Again, I will ask, did you see the Second Messenger or not? You originally were a human. You had occasion to see the difficulties of sickness and disease, the smell of excrement and urine that dwelled in one’s body, and lay on top of it. (Is it as) eating and drinking is required by a person, that the Hundred Joints and muscles ache, tears flow, and one moans and groans so that one is unable to speak?” The culprit replies “Yes, I saw this.” King Yama says “How is it that you yourself cannot recall this? Then, I ask, have you not witnessed the Third Divine Messenger? Did you not have

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27 Soothill and Hodous:58.

28 According to Soothill and Hodous, Tiandi refers to the Hindu deity Śakra, a god of the sky, who fights demons with thunderbolts (Soothill and Hodous:145).
occasion to see that one dies and the body decays, life ends, and one’s senses are permanently destroyed, and the body, once standing straight, then like a withered tree that gives up its leaves to fall on a grave mound where the birds and beasts eat it?” The culprit replies “I have seen this.” When this is finished, they are consigned to the gaolers and they go to the Great Earth Prisons.” (Yanluo wang wen zuiren 閻羅王問罪人, “King Yama Interrogates the Guilty”: Jinglu yixiang 19:258-9).

Following their reception by Lord Yama, the wicked are placed in the appropriate region of the rather complex Buddhist underworld. According to the “Sûtra of the Remembrance of the True Law,” the underworld is pattern after the previously mentioned “orthodox” layout, that is based on the “Eight Central” or “Radial Earth-Prisons.” In this model, each level punishes specific types of culprits. In general, there are specific regions for those guilty of physical crimes, vocal crimes and mental crimes. In turn, these eight levels are subdivided into an additional 16 levels. The levels in this text are as follows, with specific types of torments dedicated for specific types of transgressions. It does not list the additional 16 sub-levels or Small Earth-Prisons:

a.) For Physical Crimes:
1.) Samjiva, “Repetition,” for the killing of humans and animals. In some instances, the denizens are punished by being placed in a pit of hot excrement mixed with molten copper and insects. They are forced to eat this mixture and the insects then eat the guilty for the inside; 2.) Kâla-sutra “Black-Rope,” for different types of stealing, including using bedding and drugs originally destined for the sick. There, the guilty are bound and cut up into pieces; 3.) Samghåta “Crowded” for sexual indulgences. There, the guilty, among other things, have nails driven through their mouths or have molten copper poured down their throats; 4.) Raurava “of Screaming,” for the consumption of intoxicants. The guilty consume molten copper or are pounded by a iron pestle.

b.) For Vocal Crimes:
5.) Mahâ-raurava, “of Great Screaming” for lying. Among other punishments, the
tongue of the guilty grows and is pulled out of his or her mouth and is plowed. In
addition, worms also eat the tongue.

c.) For Mental Crimes:
6.) Tapanâ, “of Burning Heat” for false views or false practices in obtaining
enlightenment. Some are tormented by fire, some are blinded by insects who eat
their eyes, etc.; 7.) Pratapana “of Great Burning heat” for sexual defilement of
religion, for example, those that rape women or religious practitioners. For this,
they are burned and tormented by demons; and lastly, 8.) Avîci, “Unintermittent
Suffering” or “Non-Interval Suffering.”

Of all the various Earth-Prisons, Avîci is by far the most cruel, and is so reserved for
those who have committed the most heinous crimes. For Buddhism, these crimes are the Wuni
五逆, the “Five Deadly Sins” or “Five Abominations” of Buddhism, meaning parricide,
matricide, killing a monk, shedding the blood of a Buddha, and destroying the harmony of the
monastic community. In the “Sûtra of the True Remembrance of the Law,” in Avîci birds rip of
the mouths of the guilty, or their flesh is torn away by demons, or they are boiled in a pot of
copper, and their bodies are dismembered. In the “Sûtra of the Buddha's Discourse on
Contemplating the Buddhist Ocean of Samadhi,” Avîci is portrayed as a terrible place full of
countless torments, which, more often than not, plays on the desires of the guilty. When the
wicked see their desires, their wishes turn on them and they are afflicted by numerous
punishments related to their desire.

The first passage from the “Sûtra of the Buddha's Discourse on Contemplating the
Buddhist Ocean of Samadhi” begins with a description of a particular state of samadhi as related
by Gautama Buddha. In this state, the structure and function of the underworld are described. It

29 Summarized from Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga (1972:78ff).
begins with a description of the condition of the Buddha's mind while he is in a state of samadhic repose and continues with an enumeration of the different levels of the infernal regions:


Then a description of the “Enclosure”or “Citadel” of Avici follows.

The Buddha informed Ananda: “The height and breadth of Avici Earth-Prison has
been calculated to exactly 8,000 *yojanas*. It has seven layered iron enclosures with seven other floors of iron and bronze, and below there are the eighteen other partitions. The seven layers (around Avīci) are surrounded (on the outside) by the Knife Forest (Daolin 刀 林), while the inside of the seven layers of the Enclosure also includes the Sword Forest, (Jianlin 劍 林) (5.668).

And then the text proceeds to describe the various jailers of Avīci, most likely the same soldiers, who, along with Yama, vowed to punish the guilty in the underworld:

The eighteen partitions below are divided into 84,000 layers. At their corners are four large bronze dogs with bodies as broad and as long as 40 *yojanas*. Their eyes pulse with lightning; their molars resemble swords trees; their incisors resemble a mountain of blades; and their tongues resemble iron thorns. All the hairs of their bodies produce raging fire, and the smoke smells so malefic, that none of the smelly things of the world can compare with it. As for the Eighteen Gaolers, the Rāksasa (Luocha 羅 刎), and the Yaksa, Yecha (夜 叉), they each have 64 eyes, and these eyes scatter iron pellets with the “force of ten carriages.” The molars of the dogs extend upwards four *yojana*, and fire from the crown of these molars flows outward, burning in front of an iron chariot, causing the wheels with each and every rotation to produce 100 million flames. Bladed spears and edged sword-like halberds, together, emerge from the flames. Thus, this is the Avīci Enclosure of Flowing and Burning Flames. (All of) this causes the Enclosure of Avīci to turn red, like molten bronze. The gaolers have eight oxen heads on top of their own heads, and each and every oxen-head has eighteen horns. Each and every crown of the horn produces a fiery mass. This fiery mass then transforms into eighteen fiery halos. These fiery halos then make fiery knife-like wheels, rotating like wheels. Each and every rotation, with its roaring fire, fills up the Enclosure of Avīci. The bronze dogs spit out their tongues on the ground and (their tongues) resemble iron

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30 Rāksasa and the Yaksa are defined, by Soothill and Hodous, as “malignant spirits” and “malignant demons” (Soothill and Hodous:253).

31 Rushiliche, 如 十 里 車, lit. “Like 10 mile carriages,” does not translate well. Soothill and Hodous do not mention this term. Ding Fubao (1974) and Mochizuki (1954), also, do not mention this term.
thorns, and when they spit out their tongues, they (together) transform into a
tongue of immeasurable length that fills up the ground of Avîci. Within the seven
layered enclosure, there are seven large curtains, and from the top of these
curtains, flames leap out, like from a bubbling spring. (And from this) molten iron
flows, spreading out to fill up the Enclosure of Avîci (5.668).

Then, it continues with another description of other awful aspects of Avîci:

Avîci has four gates, and above the thresholds of the gates, there are 80 cauldrons
of bubbling bronze, which overflow, flowing down from the gates, filling up the
Enclosure of Avîci. Each and every division has 84,000 iron boa-constrictors and
big snakes, which spit poison and spit fire, and their bodies fill up the Enclosure.
The roars and howls of these snakes resembles the thunder and lightening of
Heaven. (There) it rains large iron pellets that fill up the Enclosure of Avîci. The
types of suffering in this Enclosure are 80,000 times 100 billion (in number), and
these sufferings are accumulated within this Enclosure. There are 500 times 100
million insects which have 84,000 maws. Out of the maws of their heads flows
fire like rain and this fills up the Enclosure of Avîci. When these insects descend,
Avîci, with the violent fire of these insects, blazes with a great roar and the red
light of this fiery blaze lights up 84,000 yojanas, extending up from Avîci, forcing
its way up to the “Mountain of Pâtâla” (Wojiaoshan 沃樵山) of the Great
Ocean and below. (There) the water of the Great Ocean drips like a huge volume
of water, which transforms, becoming great iron spear-points, filling up the
Enclosure of Avîci (5.668-669).

Then the Buddha continues with a description of the guilty, and how they are treated. He
mentions too that Avîci in particular is meant as a place to punish those who are guilty of
committing the “Five Abominations” of Buddhism. It is significant to note, that in tormenting the

32 Wojiao or Wojiaoshan is the Pâtâla Rock or Mountain. It is located on the bottom of the Ocean encompassing the
Four Continents of the Buddhist world. It sits on top of the Hot Earth-Prisons and absorbs the water from this
ocean, stopping it from overflowing (Soothill and Hodous: 241).
culprits Avîci is indeed clever, in that it constantly plays with their emotions and feeds on their desires. If, for example, they desire something, say relief from suffering, they receive their desires. But in every case, what they wish for turns out to be a newer and more cruel means of punishment:

The Buddha informed Ananda, “If there are those of the living who kill their fathers and harm their mothers, or revile and disgrace the six kinds of relatives, when it is the end of their fated lives of these culprits, the bronze dogs with gaping maws transform into eighteen carriages, resembling golden carriages with jewel encrusted canopies on top, and all of the flames transform into Jade Maidens. When the guilty see this from a distance, their heart produces such joy (that they say): “I want to travel in that! I want to travel in that!” Then the “Wind Blades,” (Fengdao 風刀), begin to dismember (their bodies), and the cold quickly silences their screams. It would be better for them to sit in the carriage with a good fire, but the fire, of itself, becomes violent, and once this is done and their words are finished, they again (think they) came to the end of their fated existence. However, in an instant they find themselves sitting in a golden carriage. They (then) turn to look up respectfully to the Jade Maidens, who all grasp iron axes and behead and dismember their bodies. The bodies descend into a fire that rises up like a circle of fire. As quickly as it takes to wave, they fall into the midst of the Great Earth-Prison of Avîci. From the upper sections, which are like circling wheels of fire, down to the boundaries of the lower sections, bodies are everywhere throughout these sections. While the bronze dogs emit a great howl, these dogs gnaw on the bones and suck out the marrow. The gaolers and the Rakâsa and cause fire from the tips of their weapons to envelope their whole bodies. All around their bodies are fire and flames, filling up the Enclosure of Avîci. Iron nets and rain-drop like knives enter their pores. (This all) transforms into Lord Yama, who accuses and taunts the foolish types of people that inhabit this prison: “When you where in the World, you were unfilial to your parents, lazy, and without the Way. You are now reborn to dwell in the famous Earth-
Prison of Avichi. You did not understand love, and were without shame, and so in receiving this suffering and vexations, you will be most unhappy.” When these words were finished, Yama vanished, not to be seen” (5.668).

After this proclamation, the culprits are herded by their gaolers throughout the various levels of Avichi for an almost immeasurable amount of time. Then the text continues to describe the punishments inflicted on those guilty of committing the Five Deadly Sins:

Those guilty of committing the Five Deadly Sins were without humility, and (for this reason) committed the Five Deadly Sins. When those guilty of committing the Five Deadly Sins die, the Eighteen Wind Knives, like Iron Fire Carts, dismember these bodies. As the fire torments them so, they accordingly utter these words: “We desire to see great trees, colourful, flowery, pure and cool, and sport beneath them—wouldn’t that be nice?” When they say this, Avichi Earth-Prison, which has a malefic sword forest, composed of 84,000 blades, transforms into precious trees, with flowers and fruit, luxuriant in growth all arranged in the front. The fire and flames of the great heat transform themselves, becoming like lotus flowers beneath these trees. When the culprits see these (they say) “What I wish for now is to get the fruit.” When these words are muttered, then quickly from these lotus flowers a violent rain comes forth. When they have been seated for an instant, many insects with irons maws emerge from the fiery flowers, penetrating their bones, entering the marrow, removing the heart and penetrating the brain. Then they clamber up the trees, and the sword branches slice off the flesh and tear out the bones (5.669).

The text continues and devotes a section to each of the various levels of the underworld and the types crimes punished there. In an earlier section the text discusses the length of time the guilty reside in the underworld. The section discussing Avichi mentions that the measure of one day and one night in Avichi Earth-Prison is the same as 16 small kalpas in this world (5.669). But ultimately the term for those residing there lasts for one Mahâkalpa. These time periods,
however, are meaningless without understanding their length. There are two methods of measuring a kalpa. The first method involves a forty square league cubed container filled with mustard seeds. Every one hundred years a seed is removed, and when the container is empty, one small kalpa is completed. On the other hand, a medium kalpa uses an eighty square league container (Matsunaga 1972:45). The second method of calculation involves a rock instead of mustard seeds. Here, a medium kalpa is measured by how long it takes for a heavenly spirit to wear out this rock by polishing it once every hundred years (Matsunaga 1972:45). According to other measurements, a small kalpa is composed of 16,800,000 years, a medium kalpa 336,000,000 years, a Mahakalpa 1,334,000,000 years (Soothill and Hodous:232).

This leads to ask what happens to the spirit after it finishes its term in the underworld. It is assumed in the above models that after eliminating bad karma in these realms one is reborn to another level of existence or *gati*. This means that a person is reincarnated as a hungry ghost, an animal, or even a human to start again and to accumulate good karma. These conditions and time periods in these realms are not entirely fixed, as external factors can influence one's potential rebirth. These conditions can be influenced by the transfer of karmic merit facilitated by the actions and donations of the living, aspects covered in the next section.

IV. The Buddhist Underworld in China-The “Solidarity of the Living and the Dead”:

Unlike the previous section, which was more concerned with the structure of the Buddhist underworld, the following focuses on the interaction between the living and the dead, or the “solidarity between the living and the dead.” In short, this section will examine differences between the previous indigenous view of the underworld and that of the relatively “newer” Buddhist view imported from outside China. In particular, it will ask, if Buddhism left any
lasting impressions on the Chinese religious worldview, how did these "newer" impressions manifest themselves?

To accomplish this task, ideas parallel to the ritually orientated worldview of the Han, Qin, and earlier will be examined. As discussed previously, the Chinese indigenous worldview incorporated a fairly comprehensive and intimate relationship between the living and the dead as identified in the family-based "ancestor worship." In this, ritual maintenance and appeasement of the dead remained central. In addition, this worldview possessed a cosmos stocked with *guishen*, the sundry "ghosts and spirits," and numerous deities linked with the bureaucracy of the afterlife, some specifically linked to the underworld in general. In short, this section will contrast these ideas against paradigms introduced by Buddhism to see how they functioned in China. The most salient of these points includes rituals orientated not only to feed the dead in the afterlife, but also to help the dead, specifically in the lower Buddhist *gatis* to attain a higher rebirth. Of particular interest to this section is the Buddhist "Ghost-Festival," the *Guijie* 鬼節, studied in depth by Stephen F. Teiser in his excellent *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (1988). Teiser proposes that the Ghost Festival, once an import from Central Asia or India, left lasting repercussions in the Chinese worldview by the fifth or sixth centuries CE. This, in turn, affected the living's relationship with the underworld to such an extent that the Chinese underworld, in particular, thereafter functioned more like the Western "Purgatory" than a simple "storehouse for the dead."

The last aspect examined below are the Buddhist spells or *dhārani*, and the continuing Chinese practice of "grave-quelling" texts, the latter of which appears relatively untouched by Buddhist influence. Examination of these facets should supply us with a notion of how the Buddhist underworld functioned specifically in the Chinese context and how the living related to the underworld within the Buddhist context.
a.) The “Ghost Festival,” the Guijie or Yulanpen and the Sangha:

S.F. Teiser’s excellent *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* examines in depth the importance of this Buddhist festival, identified as either *Guijie* or *Yulanpen* and this festival’s impact on the relationship between humanity and the underworld. Teiser proposes that through the medium of this Buddhist ritual the living were able to secure a more rapid release from the punishments of the infernal regions for the dead. This was accomplished by lay offerings given to the Buddhist monastic community, which then attempted to secure the salvation of the denizens of the underworld by a “transfer of karmic merit,” or *parināmanā*, *huixiang*. The festival, held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, came to be embodied in a series of texts that possibly originated in India or Central Asia in the first few centuries CE and were subsequently introduced to China. By the sixth century though, these texts were in turn officially accepted in the Chinese Buddhist Canon, and the concept of the Ghost Festival and numerous offshoots became so well-established in the Chinese world in general that myths that formed the background to the festival became the subject of numerous plays, morality books and precious scrolls.

The inspiration of this festival is a series of texts portraying the journeys of Maudgalyāna,

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33 The term *Yulan Pen* itself has a non-Chinese origin. There are numerous theories regarding the origin of this term. One states that is a transliteration of the Sanskrit *avalambana*, meaning “hanging down, depending on,” or the Pali *ullāmpana*, “salvation, rescue, full of mercy,” among others. The term *Yulan* itself is believed to mean “hanging upside down” referring to a condition of torment in the underworld. *Pen* in this context refers to the sacrificial bowl for the offerings to the ancestors. For additional information, see Teiser (1988:22).

34 For proof of its popularity, Teiser cites an eighth century compendium of similar festivals held during the seventh month: 1.) the *Yulanhuì* 孟蘭會, the “Yulan Assembly”; 2.) the already mentioned “Ghost Festival”; 3.) the *Zhongyuan Rì* 中元日, “Day (Honouring) the Middle Primordial”; 4.) the *Fang Yenkou* 放焰口, “Releasing (the Hungry Ghosts with) Burning Mouths”; 5.) the *Pudu* 普度, “Universal Passage (of Hungry Ghosts out of Hell)”; 6.) the *Jianggu* 捡孤, “Gathering Orphan Souls”; 7.) *Song Magu* 送麻穀, “Sending Grains;”, 8.) *Guajie* 瓜節, “Melon Festival,” (Teiser 1988:8).
rendered Mulian 目蓮 in Chinese. Originally a disciple of the Buddha, Mulian embarked on a quest to rescue his mother from the punishments of Avīci Earth-Prison. In short, his resultant travels have the air of a truly epic adventure in that he first travelled through the various Buddhist Heavens to find the location of his mother, and then journeyed to the underworld and there defeated various demon armies. Having done this, he then discovered his mother Qingti 清提 in Avīci, who was nailed to a bed with 49 long spikes for punishments in her previous life. Seeing this, Mulian then petitioned the Buddha to intervene, who smashed down the prison walls and released the denizens of the underworld, allowing them to attain a higher rebirth. In the case of Mulian's mother, she was reborn as a "hungry-ghost," or one cursed with a ravenous appetite and a needle-thin throat. Not only was she unable to satisfy her hunger, when Mulian did offer her sacrifices through the rituals of the ancestral cult, the food burst into flames before it reached her mouth. To rescue her from this fate, Mulian then appealed to the Buddha to institute the Yulanpen festival. One of the earliest scriptures on the topic relates the purpose of the festival. The Yulanpen jing 孟蘭盆經, the "Sūtra on the Yulanpen Festival" (T. 685), attributed to Dharmaraksa (ca. 265-313) states the following about the Buddha's statement on the establishment of this festival for the benefit of the dead:

The Buddha told Mulian, "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when the assembled monks of the ten directions release themselves (from a previous three month retreat), for the sake of seven generations of ancestors, your current parents, and those in distress, you should gather food of one hundred flavours and five kinds of fruits, basins for washing and rinsing, incense, oil lamps and candles, and mattresses and bedding; take the sweetest, prettiest things in the world and place them in a bowl and offer it to the assembled monks, those of virtue of the ten directions... When you make offerings to these kinds of monks as they release themselves, then your current parents, seven generations of ancestors, and the six
kinds of relatives will obtain release from suffering in the three evil paths of rebirth (the three gatis of rebirth as a denizen of the underworld, as Hungry Ghost, and as an Animal); at that moment they will be liberated and clothed and fed naturally. If one's parents are living, they will have one hundred years of joy and happiness. If they are deceased, then seven generations of ancestors will be reborn in the heavens; born freely through transformation, they will enter into the light of heavenly flowers and receive unlimited joy.” (Trans. Teiser 1988:50-52).

The above passage is significant because it reveals some interesting facets regarding the Buddhist perception of the underworld in general. First, it alludes to the centrality of the idea of the “transfer of merit” for the benefit of the dead, and, second, the role and function of the Buddhist monastic community regarding the “cult of the dead.”

As mentioned previously, one of the main implications regarding karma concerns that of one’s “personal responsibility” or one’s “personal guilt,” and the related idea of a Buddhist “moral cosmos.” This aspect and the introduction and subsequent popularity of Buddhism and Buddhist concepts leads to some interesting questions about how the idea of karma reconciled itself to the Chinese worldview. Namely, was the idea of karma compatible with the indigenous Chinese worldview that stressed “collective responsibility”? In short, it was entirely compatible, as karma, in the context of the Ghost Festival, addresses both the concerns of the individual and the family in general. In function, karma resembles currency, in that it is entirely malleable and transferable. Specifically through the ritual medium, it is transferred by the Buddhist monk or the Sangha to those languishing in the afterlife so they too can attain a better rebirth as was the case of Mulian’s mother. For these reasons, the living are able to fulfill their “collective responsibility.” It is interesting to note that language used in the above text, that of benefiting “current parents, seven generations of ancestors, and six kinds of relatives,” would not sound
entirely out of place in the practices of the Han.

To understand the Ghost Festival and the implications of karma, we must examine the role of the monk and the sangha in the Chinese context. In his study of the topic, Teiser mentions that, in addition to the monk's emphasis on attaining enlightenment and hence potential release from Samsara, the monk too possessed "shamanistic" powers (Teiser 1989:140ff). According to Buddhism, when the Buddha attained enlightenment he was endowed with the six abhijña, the liutung 六通, the "six super-knowledges" or "six penetrations": 1.) magical powers; 2.) ability to hear anywhere; 3.) knowledge of other's minds; 4.) memory of former lives; 5.) ability to see everywhere; and 6.) knowledge of the cessation of one's rebirth. In essence, these six qualities are the functional equivalents for the shaman's soul-flight and even other magical functions, such as healing, exorcism, and even the securing of good harvests. In addition, monks, by virtue of their renouncing the world, specifically their family, are to be, ideally, empty of karma, making the transfer of merit all the more easier. As for the monk's relationship with the Ghost Festival itself, his function of aiding and releasing those suffering in the infernal regions culminated during the Ghost Festival when the monk, holding a "pewter staff," reenacting the Buddha's actions of releasing the damned, smashed earthen-ware bowls marking the opening of the gates of the underworld. Once released, the denizens were transported across the Infernal River in a boat, an action mimicked by participants who pretended to be oarsmen.35 Once done, then those in the underworld would obtain a higher rebirth.

The role of the monk and the entire ritual process itself, calls into question the Buddhist

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35 This summary is from Gernet (1995:202 and 365-66, n. 25). In his summary he describes a ritual that are suggestive of a rite that may have been practised in tenth century Dunhuang 敦煌. In this instance, the monk reenacts the action of Dizang Wang Pusa 地藏王菩薩, the "Earth-Store Bodhisattva," Ksitigarbha, who also functions as a saviour for the denizens of the underworld. Dizang, however, is a later figure and came to prominence in the Tang. For a reference to Ksitigarbha, see De Visser (1915).
monastic complex, that is, the role of the sangha and its relationship with the community. J. Gernet's *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History From the Fifth to Tenth Century* (1985) offers valuable insight into the relationship between the sangha and Chinese society. He writes that the hold Buddhism held over Chinese practices at this time manifested itself from private family mortuary cults all the up to large public festivals for the community at large, and even to the level of Imperial patronage on behalf of the empire and the dynasty (Gernet 1995:207). He writes that Buddhists became intimately linked with the Chinese "cult of the dead," in that most Buddhist monasteries, and chapels founded by members of the upper class were erected for the benefit of persons of high rank, meaning emperors, members of the imperial family and those of great private families (Gernet 1995:283). On a another level, Buddhists performed rituals for the community at large, including the "Lamp Festival," Randeng 然登, the "Procession of Statues," Xingxiang 行像, great "Vegetarian Feasts," Zhai 齋, the above mentioned "Ghost Festival," and general recitations of Sūtras (Gernet 1995:200ff). These transactions, too, manifested themselves on even a smaller scale, particularly for private funerary rituals or commemorative practices attached to the cult of the dead. Then, monks and the sangha recited Buddhists Sūtras to hasten the spirits of the dead to a better rebirth or even to a higher rebirth in the Paradises, such as Sukhâvatī, Jingtu 淨土, the Buddhist "Pure Land." Gernet cites numerous examples of this trait. One example is a list of offerings given to a monastery in Shazhou 沙洲 in the eighth century CE:

(Donated:) Seven feet of cloth and a quantity of copper for the casting of the bell (for the monastery); A lump of *a-li-lo*; These offerings are made in the first place on behalf of my deceased father and mother: I do not know what fate has befallen them since their death; second on my own behalf, to save me from death (?) And ensure my good health. On this day, I present myself at the monastery to request
the recitation of a sutra. The believer Li Chi-tzu, on the first day of the first month (Gernet 1995:204-205).

The text continues to talk of donations from other people to benefit the sons and daughters and other family members as well. Other texts mention similar ideas and how donations to the monasteries were to benefit individuals, for example, the ill and those about to die, and the community at large. Buddhism and the Buddhist community, hence, addressed most of the religious needs of society, from the level of the Imperial government to an individual one.

The centrality of the Buddhist sangha in religious practices leads us to some interesting conclusions regarding the Chinese Buddhist practices after the Han. Teiser writes that Buddhism and the Buddhist monastic community, in general, transformed the mechanism surrounding the post-Han Chinese “cult of the dead,” in that the sangha became to be included in the “circle of reciprocity between descendants and ancestors,” a trait that existed to such an extent that the sangha acted as “middleman” for the community by transferring merit for the benefit of the dead (Teiser 1994:196-7). Instead of the previous religious practices of the state-sponsored “ancestral cults,” and family or clan ancestral temples with the involvement of exorcists, mediums or shamans, the Chinese of the Han and after began to rely increasingly more on the organized Buddhist monastic community, which, through the doctrines of karma and the “transfer of merit,” possessed a fairly thorough and broad based appeal in that it not only addressed “collective concerns,” but individual ones as well. It is interesting to note that by comparison the lay community’s transfer of merit to benefit the dead for a speedy rebirth and the reciprocal recitation of Sūtras by the sangha resembles Jotswald’s previously mentioned account of St. Odilo of Cluny, in that “suffrages,” in the form of donations and prayers, released the suffering

souls in the Christian underworld to hasten them to Heaven. This leads us to the conclusion, that, in the way the living related to the underworld in the Chinese Buddhist context, the underworld is more of a “Purgatory” than anything else.

b.) The Buddhist “Bureaucracy” of the Afterlife in Han and Six Dynasties China:

As discussed above, the underworld in the Buddhist context as imported to China functioned primarily as a place for post-mortem punishment. Due to this emphasis, the presence of the function of a “store-house of the dead” that administered and pacified the potentially troublesome guishen is secondary in importance. In short, Buddhist ideas regarding the management of the “spirits of the dead” differed only slightly from their contemporary Chinese counterparts, and, in the end, did not replace the firmly established Chinese bureaucratic paradigm of the cosmos. In fact, the idea of bureaucratically administered cosmos flourished in the centuries following the introduction of Buddhism, an aspect that is illustrated later. But, to establish a basis of comparison for the next chapter, we have to establish how Indian Buddhist ideas expressed the relationship between the living and the potentially “troublesome spirits.” To demonstrate Buddhist ideas of the this topic, we will first look at any new elaborations introduced to China. In doing so, we will follow the same pattern used in the previous chapter. The first aspect examined below are the Buddhist “spells” or “incantations,” the dhārani. This will illustrate how Buddhists responded to supernatural forces. Second, it will look at the Chinese “grave-quelling” texts, particularly Buddhist ones that appeared in the centuries following the introduction of Buddhism. By examining these aspects, we will see how Chinese Buddhism dealt with the spirits of the dead to see if the bureaucratic pattern still existed in this context. In all, this section intends to establish whether or not Indian Buddhism replaced, or at
least complemented, the previously overwhelmingly bureaucratic view of the cosmos as established in the Qin and Han.

According to the most succinct and commonly recognized definition, dhārani, rendered zhou 咒 in Chinese, are spells intended specifically for personal use (Eliot 1957:1.332). The history of dhārani extends far back into the early history of Buddhism, with their first mention appearing in the first Buddhist Council, Rājagrha, convened shortly after the death of the Buddha in c. 483 BCE (Eliot 1957:1.258). At first it seems that the primary function of the dhārani was to protect the Buddhist monks and nuns from various ailments, demonic and otherwise. However, their role in Theravada Buddhism was not that central. The Mahāyāna tradition, in contrast, placed more emphasis on this practices and compiled numerous texts composed of or at least mentioning dhārani, and through this effort dhārani came to take on broader implications.

One textual example of this trend is the popular Sūtra the Saddharma-Pundarīka, the “Sūtra of the Lotus of the True Law,” a Mahāyāna text translated into Chinese in the Western Jin and rendered Miaofa lianhua jing 妙法蓮華經 (T. 262). Chapter 26 of this text states the function and origin of the dhārani as being imparted by the Buddha and later by another Bodhisattva. This chapter mentions that those who keep this text in memory or in a book and that those who preach the text will receive protection:

Let anyone rather climb on our heads than hurt these teachers of Dharma, be the attacker yaksa, or rāśkasa, or hungry ghost, or pūtana, or kṛtya, or vetāla, or ghanta, or omāraka, or apasmāraka, or yaksakṛtya [various types of demons], or human kṛtya (manusyakṛtya), or fever, whether of one day, or of two days, or of three days, or of four days, or as many as seven days, or perpetual fever, or anyone in the form of a man, or of a woman, or of a boy, or of a girl, even in a dream: let none of these harm them! (Saddharma-Pundarīka 26; trans. Hurvitz 1976:323).
The above passage reveals two general and important facets of non-Chinese Buddhism. First, it reveals that the belief in baleful demons or spirits is ubiquitous in most religions, Buddhism included. It also suggests that spell-casting and exorcisms are the most efficacious way of dealing with these spirits. In this aspect, it is not different from the indigenous Chinese view. Second, Buddhist dhārani do not rely on a system of appeals to a higher magistrate, or a personality, particularly a Buddhist one. Instead, the emphasis here is placed solely on the power of the Buddhist Dharma itself and the efficacious nature of the text, and not divine personalities, such as Yama. In this aspect then, Indian Buddhist views of spells differ substantially from the Chinese case, as revealed in the "Recipes for Fifty-Two Ailments." In the latter case, the practitioner evokes the authority of the bureaucrats of the cosmos and becomes invested with the power of this office and not the power of the text itself.

Other practices from this Chinese Buddhist matrix clarify this point, in particular, Chinese Buddhist “grave-quelling” texts. The studies of Kleeman (1984), Seidel (1987a), and Hansen (1995), suggest that the introduction of Buddhism did not substantially alter the Chinese practice of the use of “grave-quelling” texts, as there is no substantial mention of Buddhist equivalents from this context. The only real digression on this practice is found in “Bei-er's Statement of Accompany Clothing and Possessions,” a grave text dated to 607 CE. The text is, in some sense, an appeal, specifically to the deity Wudao Dashen 五道大神, a Buddhist deity, so-named in reference to the Five Gatis. This text mentions that Bei-er 碑免, a Buddhist “bhiksu of great virtue,” who practised the Buddhist Wujie 五誡, the “Five Precepts” (no killing, stealing, adultery, lying, and intoxicating liquors), and the Shishan 十善, the “Ten Virtues” (no killing, stealing, adultery, lying, double-tongue, coarse language, filthy language, covetous, anger, and perverted views), aspects which would hasten one to a speedy and convenient rebirth as a
human. According to the text, he practised these virtues to such an extent that he should “not be detained” and he should be “permit(ted) to pass freely” (Kleeman 1985:25-26). What is revealing here is that there is no real mention of pacifying the spirit of the dead and isolating it from the living. Segregation here seems irrelevant. The presence of such a text in the grave of a Buddhist does suggest that at least there is some presence of bureaucratic procedure. However, as mentioned earlier, these texts belong mostly to the popular religious matrix of China, and as in this matrix the lines between various religious traditions are often blurred, as practicality is more relevant than doctrine. This then is a simple case of Chinese indigenous practices influencing Buddhist ones and not the reverse. Again, it seems that the Buddhist Dharma, or at least the teachings, specifically those that govern rebirth are at work here, as well as the idea of aiding the dead in achieving a better rebirth.

As discussed above, it seems that the Buddhist underworld is not a bureaucracy in the same vein as is the Chinese indigenous one. Instead of a bureaucracy, that is a system of appeals to the bureaucracy of the cosmos, the ultimate source of authority in Buddhism lies in the Buddhist Dharma itself. As mentioned in the section on Buddhist dhārāṇī, the ultimate authority is the text, the Sutra, and not a reliance on a power invested by an outside authority or personality. If the latter was the case, then Buddhist Bodhisattvas would be subject to appeals in the same fashion as were the Chinese deities of the Qin and Han. This trait is evident in the role of Yama. In particular, the above mentioned passage from the Jinglu yixiang and the Anguttara-Nikaya, Yama merely chides the guilty for not recognizing the same “Three Messengers” that Gautama Buddha witnessed when he began to ponder the source of suffering. He is not a judge here, merely an overseer, and seems to possess no real authority as he is subject to his own

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37 Soothill and Hodous (118 and 47/50).
karma. If invested with a firm control of the dead, then, his name would appear in the *dhārāṇī* and Chinese grave-quelling texts. In these situations, his name is not mentioned. Specifically, he, too, suffers from his own guilt, like the denizens he administers, in that he is forced three times a day to drink molten bronze. One would think that a magistrate of great power would be exempt from this, but he is not. Later texts, specifically the “Scripture on the Ten Kings,” mention that Yama, guilty and punished himself, will eventually leave his post in the underworld and become the Bodhisattva Samantarāja, Puwang 普王, the “Universal King,” or Samantabhadra, Puxian 普賢, the Bodhisattva “of Universal Sagacity,” meaning dhyāna, and one of the left and right hand assistants to the Buddha, closely linked to the “Lotus Sūtra” (Soothill and Hodous:374). In sum, everyone and everything is subject to the functioning of the Dharma, not a bureaucratic imperative.

This leads us to ask, did the Chinese view of the underworld change substantially? Specifically, did the lack of a bureaucratic emphasis in the Indian Buddhist matrix affect the previous view of the function of the Chinese cosmos? To answer this question, we can examine numerous mid-seventh century Buddhist tales regarding journeys to the underworld. Hansen (1995) in her *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China* writes that popular portrayals of the workings of the Chinese Buddhist underworld involve Yama and a host of officials, who weighed the actions of the dead entirely according to Buddhist precepts (Hansen 1995:193). Here, Hansen suggests that in the Chinese context Buddhist figures began to function more as judges and bureaucrats, which may be a result of Chinese influences on Buddhism. Furthermore, she also mentions that the Taoists practitioners, by travelling to the underworld itself, actively

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petitioned the officers of the underworld. In these cases, the Taoists acted almost like lawyers in cases where the living are afflicted from beyond the grave, to settled affairs that were not resolved in the real world (Hansen 1995:190-1). This is a function Buddhist monks did not do. It seems then that the Buddhist monks and the sangha, even in the Chinese context, apparently lacked this “bureaucratic” tendency, focussed more on releasing those trapped in lower forms of rebirth and the efficacy of the Dharma.

The examination of the Buddhist underworld as imported to China in the centuries after the Han stands in contrast to the previous views of the Chinese underworld. First, it is apparent that the Buddhist worldview, through the vehicles of rebirth, karma, and the “transfer of merit,” is, by comparison, a moral-cosmos. So thorough is this emphasis that other aspects, for example, the underworld functioning as a “simple storehouse of the dead” combined with the administration of the problematic spirits of the dead that can afflict the living, are pushed to the side. There is no doubt that these particular aspects did exist in the Indian Buddhist worldview, but their importance is obviously secondary to the underworld’s function as a place for post-mortem punishment, hence, the lack of a bureaucratic emphasis.

In general terms, the Buddhist underworld at this stage in China operates in accord with the Buddhist Dharma, and all its implications. Hence, rebirth, karma, and all the details that ran the cosmos, in particular human suffering, functioned as the overriding principle. As a result, the bureaucratic mechanistic view of the cosmos as established in the Han lingers in the background of Buddhism to slowly merge with imported ideas. Instead of appealing to deities, or divine officials, the Buddhism of the Han and Six Dynasties China began to bypass the previous system of private family ancestor cults of early China and opted for the elaborate and organized Buddhist complex of the Sangha, who passed on karmic merit to aid those suffering in the afterlife.
However, these ideas were slow to gain popularity, as these ideas later became evident in later texts as the “Scripture on the Ten Kings,” where traditionally Buddhist personalities, Lord Yama in particular, are placed in this model of the underworld alongside typically Chinese bureaucratic personalities such as a the personification of Mt. Tai. In the end, this amalgamation of Chinese and Indian Buddhist practices and beliefs set became the most common paradigm regarding the how the Chinese perceived the underworld and how they dealt with it.

This thesis maintains that Buddhism appealed to the Chinese because it offered new ideas of how the cosmos operated. In short, it explained the afterlife in more elaborate and more moral terms. For instance, the afterlife and the related beliefs of the Qin and Han focussed primarily on maintaining relationships with the dead, which tried to maintain good relations with the dead. Related to this, the idea of limiting suffering was also central, for if the relations with the dead had soured through an improper performance of rituals, then the potentially problematic spirits were to be driven away, and in most cases controlled by the various offices of the cosmos. Here, rituals are central. This belief system, however, did not, however, explain what happens to the “wicked” in the afterlife. In other words, according to this view the “wicked” in the afterlife did not suffer for their indiscretions in this life. Buddhism, in contrast, stated that they did indeed suffer for their crimes, so here morality is of more importance. In fact, all beings potentially suffered in any of their potential rebirths, but the “wicked” suffered in the extreme. These new aspects introduced by Buddhism were not at all disruptive to the fabric of the Chinese worldview. Given that Karma, by nature, concerns itself primarily with “individual responsibility,” it appears logical that it would run contrary to the previous view of a Chinese sense of “collective responsibility.” In fact it did not for the simple reason that, as the examples above have shown, karma is entirely malleable and transferable. In turn, it adapted itself quite
capably to the ancestral cult of China, it that it became an adjunct in operations of the underworld through the concept of “transfer of merit” by addressing both individual and collective concerns.

The real difference between Indian Buddhist and indigenous Chinese views of the afterlife is found in how the living interacted with the dead and their perception of function of the underworld. In sum, the “storehouse of the dead” paradigm does not require ritual offerings for release, as the underworld is not a place of punishment, rather confinement. In contrast, Buddhist rituals concerned themselves with attaining release as the realm itself was driven by the overwhelming concern of punishments for wrongdoing. But, according to Buddhism, one’s stay in these realms, or in every potential rebirth, is entirely temporary. But in any case, potential release remained central. As offerings and the transfer of karmic merit operated as a means to attain this release, they can be characterized as the functional equivalents for the “suffrages” and in turn the underworld itself is like the “Purgatory” of the Medieval European world. These points lead us to the next chapter, which concerns the Chinese, particularly the Taoist response to these newer aspects and how Taoism reconciled the profoundly bureaucratic emphasis on managing the various guishen and the overwhelming influence of the Buddhist “moral death.”
Chapter Four: The Taoist Underworld

I. Introduction:

This chapter will examine the Taoist underworld as it appeared during the periods between the late Warring States and the end of the Six Dynasties. This will be accomplished by a survey of the history of Taoism, first, by focussing on Taoist beliefs and practices that existed before the arrival of Buddhism, and, second, by examining Taoism after the arrival of Buddhism in the First century of the Common Era. Specific emphasis will be placed on the later period.

Taoism first appeared during the last centuries of the Warring States Period in the form of texts, products of a handful of independent scholars. At this time, Taoism was not organized on a large scale and it did not possess mass-appeal. When it became more organized, it existed as a doctrine for a potential state-cult, epitomized by the Huang-Lao school of Taoism in the second century BCE. Only during the second century CE did it possess mass appeal. During its earliest manifestations, the Taoist views of the afterlife and the underworld largely adhered to ideas prevalent in the Chinese indigenous religious matrix. To reiterate, this matrix viewed the spirit of the recently dead as entering an underworld, a place of “neutral death,” a condition without any sense of post-mortem punishment, while at the same time, these spirits became ancestors transformed through proper ritual procedure. Without proper ritual performance, the spirit could potentially return as a revenant, wreaking havoc on the living. Further, the entire cosmos by the end of the Warring States period, became increasingly viewed as a bureaucracy, one which

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1 The earliest manifestation of Taoism is often referred to as daojia 道家, a term used by the first century CE historian Ban Gu, the author of the Hanshu, who classified the texts of the late Warring States Period for the Imperial library. His influential Yiwenzhi 藝文志, the “Treatise on Literature,” categorized Confucian, Legalist, Taoist texts and others, earmarked by the suffix jia 家, which implies “classification” or “school.” The Zhuangzi, the Dao de Jing, the Liezi, texts discussed later, and other texts related to alchemy, hygiene, and ritual according to the term daojia. This term later became translated as “Taoist Philosophy.” This term refers to the earliest Taoist textual tradition, standing in contrast to the later daijiao 道教, “Doctrine of the Tao,” which refers to Taoist religious movements that arose during the second century CE. These groups are discussed later.
regulated the movements of the stars, and the manifestations of the seasons. In short, it
functioned as a "storehouse of the dead," which lorded over the dead and dispensed human
suffering through the "ghosts and spirits." Accordingly, to alleviate ghostly or demonic attack, it
was believed that ritualistic petitions to the appropriate gods would contain problematic spirits.
Hence, not only did the underworld function as an abode for the dead, it operated as a governing
body concerned with regulating the dead. It was not concerned with post-mortem punishment, as
any retributive punishment was experienced in this life, not the next. In addition, any retributive
punishment was distributed according to "collective morality" or "collective responsibility," a
concept that coincides with Chinese legal practices. This latter point implies that one's family or
lineage was ultimately held responsible for individual actions.

In contrast, by the time Buddhism entered China, Buddhism already possessed
functioning post-mortem realms concerned with the punishment of the wicked dead, and these
realms, in turn, became more complex over the succeeding centuries. Driven by the dictates of
dharma and karma, the Buddhist cosmos created a condition for both the good and bad to receive
their appropriate recompense, either in this life or the next. The most relevant manifestation of
this retributive punishment is, of course, in the Buddhist underworld. By comparison, death in
this context is "moral," in that one is judged, and, if need be, punished in the afterlife.
Furthermore, Buddhism also possessed ritual means to attain the release of these suffering souls,
rituals which in many ways resemble the Western concept of "Purgatory." These ideas, in
particular, brought about changes in Taoist beliefs and practices, as Taoism, by the Han and after,
came into competition with Buddhism, and thereby adopted Buddhist ideas, and reformed its
own ideas regarding the underworld.

To examine these changes in the Taoist underworld, this Chapter will examine four
"case-studies" regarding the structure and function of these infernal regions. The first is the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (HY 1176), a Taoist text dated to the mid-second century BCE. It is significant because it portrays the Taoist notion of a "neutral death," and an overwhelming sense of a bureaucratically run cosmos. The second is the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (HY 1093), the "Scripture of Great Peace," or "Great Equanimity," an important text not only because it adheres to ideas established in the *Huainanzi*, but also because it possesses perhaps the earliest mention of a Taoist "moral death." The third case study focusses on texts from the Shangqing 上清, or "Upper Purity" tradition of Taoism. Among other things, the Shangqing underworld primarily portrays a "neutral death," possessing ideas related to "collective responsibility." At the same time, it hints at a "moral death," as individual spirits are punished in the underworld for specific infractions. The fourth and final "case-study" is found in texts originating from the Lingbao 靈寶, or "Numinous Jewels" tradition. In simple terms, the underworld of this tradition is perhaps the closest related to a "moral death," resulting from the Lingbao’s reliance on Buddhist ideas for inspiration, specifically post-mortem punishment and release from the infernal regions. But at the same time, it still retained numerous other motifs from the Chinese indigenous matrix, creating a line of continuity between early beliefs and practices regarding the Chinese underworld and those emerging after the arrival of Buddhism in China.

II. The Emergence of Taoism:

By the end of the Eastern or Later Han, Taoism emerged as a coalition of numerous elements that existed in the previous centuries, and, as a whole, eventually came to encompass

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2 Two dates are accepted for the compilation of the text. The first, 139 BCE, signifies the presentation of the texts to Han Wudi (r. 140-86) by Liu An (180-122). The second date coincides with Liu An’s suicide in 122 BCE. It is possible that at this point in time, government officials confiscated his papers and placed them in the Library (Major 1993:4). Scholarship is not certain which date is correct. The history of this text is discussed later.
beliefs and practices from both the elite and popular strata of Chinese society. These elements are so divergent and varied that the very nature of “Taoism” is hard to define, and is, hence, subject to numerous debates. Despite this, the entire tradition is bound together by a few key themes. The first theme is the recognition of the earliest texts as a source of inspiration and authority for subsequent Taoist developments, the second, beliefs and practices linked to the attainment of immortality or longevity, and, the third, the development of a distinct Taoist organization and liturgy, meaning the outward expressions of faith, a priesthood, interaction and support by the society, and even rituals.

For the sake of brevity, this thesis contends that three readily identifiable points or nodes appear in the historical time line of the early development of this tradition. The first point appears during the late Warring States Period, when various schools of thought, such as Confucianism, Legalism, and even Taoism itself emerged to propose solutions for the centuries of continuous warfare and chaos of this period. For Taoism, these ideas are exemplified in the earliest texts, seminal texts which formed the framework for subsequent developments. The second relevant point for the development of Taoism is found during the first centuries of the Former Han, when Taoism competed with Confucianism to become the official state ideology. This period is significant as this competition added momentum to changes in the tradition. The third point occurs during the last decades of the Later Han, yet another period of chaos. At this time, two relatively simultaneous trends occurred: first, the emergence of organized Taoist popular healing cults, and, second, the introduction of Buddhism in China. As a result of these stimuli, the Taoist tradition consistently reformed itself, so that shortly after the Later Han Taoism incorporated a variety of elements making it substantially different from the earliest Taoist textual tradition. Throughout the earliest periods, Taoism remained a product of the elite of Chinese society.
Indeed, it did sometimes look to the popular strata for inspiration, but rarely did it adopt popular practices without question, and only did so on a large scale when Taoist sects emerged in the countryside during the Later Han. But, then it redefined or reconfigured popular practices to suit its own, bringing exorcistic practices aligned according to the bureaucratic motif into its own worldview.

To examine these trends, these next subsections follow these guidelines. First, the history of Taoism will be divided into three conceptual time periods: the Late Warring States, the Qin and Early Han, and the Later Han and Six Dynasties Periods. Further, special emphasis will be placed on developments related to the afterlife and the underworld.

a.) From Antiquity to the Han:

To start, the first real inklings of Taoism as an identifiable tradition can be found during the later centuries of the Warring States Period, a fairly fertile and creative period that witnessed the proliferation of a handful of independent thinkers, who thereby inspired numerous and diverse schools of thought, such as the Confucian, Legalist, Logician, Yin-Yang, Mohist, and Taoist schools. All of these schools sought to solve the centuries of chaos, and the Taoist response is embodied in three seminal texts. The first is the recognition of the earliest texts as a source of inspiration. These texts, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, named after the thinker of the same name (first chapters composed Fourth century BCE), the *Daode Jing* 道德經, the “Scripture of the Tao and Its Power,” (Third century BCE), attributed to the semi-legendary Laozi 老子, and the *Liezi* 列子, named after the legendary thinker of the same name (earliest portions composed late Warring States, revised 300 CE), became the inspiration for later Taoist schools and texts.

These earliest Taoist texts mention little about the cosmos and the underworld. In general,
the Taoist view of the cosmos at this time is inseparable from ideas that existed previous to the Qin and Han, that is, the quest for immortality, the ancestral cult, and others. The only Taoist elaborations on these topics are found in the cult of immortality, which may have been drawn from the popular strata for inspiration. K. Schipper, writes that elements represented in the Zhuangzi originate from what he identifies as “shamanism” (Schipper 1993:6). The first chapter of the Zhuangzi makes numerous “shamanistic-like references,” including soul-flights, endurance of adverse weather conditions, and control of the weather, all stock abilities of the shaman (Watson 1968:33). In this context, Zhuangzi uses the shamanistic model to describe one who has obtained the Tao in the Taoist sense, thereby creating a set of motifs, which influenced later developments of Taoism. In particular, the ideal of an “Immortal,” Xianren 仙人, a “Sage,” Sheng 聖, and a “Perfected Man,” Zhenren 真人, terms mentioned in the Zhuangzi, eventually became stock phrases in the cult of immortality. Combined with this, passages similar to the shamanistic soul-flights of the earlier mentioned Shanhaijing, the Chuzi and the Feiyi Funeral Banner, elements discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, appear throughout the Liehzi. Later Taoism incorporated all of these themes and motifs and infused them with the centrality of Tao.

Given the lack of emphasis on the role of the underworld, and even a lack of mention of post-mortem punishment, it is evident that the general view of early Taoism coincides with the

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3 As mentioned earlier, the indigenous matrix of Warring States China already possessed beliefs associated with either preserving one’s life or even securing a pleasurable existence in the afterlife, traits indicated by rituals dedicated to deities and ancestors, and the inclusion of grave-goods or even preserving the body after death. One scholar, Yü Yingshi, traced the development of these trends. He mentions that the first references of obtaining long-life occurs in Zhou bronze inscriptions, which frequently include the character shou 壽, meaning “long-life” (Yü 1964/65:87). By the eighth century, the terms nanlao 難老, “retarding old-age,” wusi 無死, “no-death” and others appear frequently in prayers for blessings in bronze inscriptions (Yü 1964/65:87-89). Further, princes of the Warring States Period, such as King Wei 威 (358-320), King Xuan 宣 (319-301) of Qi, and King Zhao 昭 (311-279) of Yen, sponsored the aforementioned fangshi, or “ritual specialists,” to pursue “drugs of no-death,” and expeditions to find these drugs and immortals (Yü 1964/65:90).

4 The most significant passage illustrating this trait is found in B. Watson’s translation The Complete Works of Taoism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 33.
view of the indigenous beliefs of the afterlife before the arrival of Buddhism. That is to say, that 
the option of potential pleasurable existence in the afterlife belonged to the elite, and that there is 
no punishment of the "wicked dead" in the afterlife. The condition of the dead according to the 
earliest Taoist tradition is "neutral."

b.) Developments in the Qin and the Former Han:

The period between the establishment of the Qin empire in 221 BCE and the end of the 
Former Han in 8 CE witnessed the refinement of the same themes. Suffice to say, the 
environment of the Qin and Han had substantially changed from the chaos the Warring States 
period. This fact alone provided a different set of stimuli and set in motion further changes. In 
particular, the political vacuum caused by the disintegration of the legalist Qin state in 206 BCE 
sparked yet another round of competition for the position of official state doctrine. Searching for 
an alternative, the courts of China patronized various schools of thought. Hence, once again, 
Taoist thought prospered, culminating with the Huang-Lao Dao 黃老道, the "Way of the 
Yellow Emperor and Laozi," a school which came to embody the maturation of Taoist social and 
political thought as a state cult. In addition to developments in political thought, the entire 
religious matrix of China refined the various beliefs and practices attached to the cult of 
immortality or longevity. These in turn became attached to Taoism.

In response to the political vacuum existing at this time, Taoism put forth the "Way of the 
Yellow Emperor and Laozi" as their candidate for state orthodoxy. A product of the Warring 
States period from the Academy of Jixia 稷下 in the state of Qi 齊, Huang-Lao Taoism later

5 Peerenboom posits that the establishment of the Jixia academy was an attempt by the Tian clan to legitimize their 
rule as they usurped the previous established ruling house in 481 BCE (Peerenboom 1993:224-25). To accomplish 
this task, the Tian acted as a patron to the wandering shi by granting them generous stipends, luxurious quarters, 
high rank, large retinues, and "lecture halls" near the Jixia gate at the West wall of the city (Schwartz 1985:238).
became so popular by the mid-second century BCE, it became, as some scholars have argued, the “dominant court ideology” of the Han (Peerenboom 1993:224). This popularity, however, was short-lived, for in 136 Han Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 141-87), as part of his efforts to centralize power, instituted Confucianism as official state doctrine, banished the Legalists from court, and removed any potential threat to his power, Taoist included. As a result of this purge, Liu An 劉安 (180-122), the “King of Huainan,” an active patron of Taoism and chief editor of the Huainanzi, was charged with sedition. To avoid execution, he chose to commit suicide. Wudi then confiscated his fiefdom, executed Liu An's family and retainers, and Huang-Lao Taoism was eclipsed by Confucianism, as it was instituted as the official curriculum in the state-run academies.

At the centre of Huang-Lao Taoism is a state-cult dedicated to Huangdi 黃帝, the “Yellow Emperor,” and a profound emphasis placed on a bureaucratically run cosmos. First, Huangdi is a semi-divine, semi-human figure of Chinese remote antiquity, who according to legend, dates to the mid-third millennium BCE. By the Han, this figure became linked to the Taoist Laozi, thereby creating a composite deity. Second, the other hallmark of this school is its concern with “patterns.” Huang-Lao Taoism stressed that the ultimate source for authority in the cosmos rested in Heaven, and in turn, Heaven revealed a series of patterns, evident in the structure and operation of the cosmos.

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6 Peerenboom argues that the fall of Huang-Lao Taoism may have resulted from the pervasive power of the Confucians at court, or it may have resulted from the limitations placed on the ruler on by Huang-Lao thought itself, as it required low taxes, minimal government expenditures, and frugality on the part of the ruler. This idea went against Wudi's aim of centralizing his rule (Peerenboom 1993:253-254).

7 This school presented Huangdi as a “sage-ruler,” a moral exemplar, who sponsored cultural development, unified the ancient states of antiquity, established a centralized state by military force, and implemented laws and punishment, all in accord to the ceaseless rhythms of nature. By the Han, the remnants of the Jixia school had incorporated the earliest teachings of Taoism, including the legendary founder of Taoism, Laozi himself, into its doctrine. For a summary of the significance of Huang-Lao refer to Peerenboom (1993:90ff).

8 Peerenboom characterizes this theme as “foundational naturalism.” According to his definition, “foundational naturalism implies the following: first, it assumes that humanity is a fundamental part of the natural order and understood as a part of an organic or holistic system; second, this natural order retains the highest values or priority,
into bureaus and offices, the government of the real world was likewise divided. Everything within the government, including the ruler and the bureaucracy, and everything within society, laws for example, are subject to these patterns. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese of the Late Warring States and Qin and Han periods increasingly viewed the cosmos as a bureaucracy in form and function to explain the regularity of the motion of the stars, the seasons, and one's fate. Huang-Lao Taoism expanded these ideas and presented a more organized or bureaucratically oriented cosmos on a far greater scale than ever expressed, in turn, to a great extent, influencing later Taoist portrayals of the cosmos, and, hence, the underworld. These influences will be examined later.

Another stream of thought and practice affected by the conditions of the Qin and Han is the cult of longevity or immortality. Again, as was the case with Taoist schools in the early Han, Imperial patronage contributed to these newer developments, all based on previously existing themes. Slowly over the centuries, these ideas, once common to the indigenous matrix of Chinese religious thought and practice, became further attached to Taoism and refined. As mentioned previously, the indigenous Chinese matrix of pre-Warring States and Warring States China already possessed beliefs associated with either preserving one's life or even securing a pleasurable or comfortable condition in the afterlife. These traits are indicated by the performance of rituals to obtain long-life from the various deities or ancestors, and the inclusion of grave goods or even preserving the body after death.\(^9\)

Though it existed earlier, the cult of immortality gained momentum from Imperial especially for the human realm; and, third, the human social realm should ideally be consistent and compatible with the this natural order. At the same time, this cosmic or natural order serves as the basis or foundation for the construction of the human order (Peerenboom 1993:27ff.).

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\(^9\) See Yü (1964/65) for reference.
patronage during the Qin and Han. The real impetus for the development of the cult of
immortality coincided with the reigns of Qin Shi Huangdi, and later Han Wudi. Both of these
emperors sponsored expeditions to locate the abodes of the immortals to find the secrets of
immortality: Qin Shi Huangdi sent expeditions to locate the island of Penglai in the East, as did
Han Wudi, but the latter also sent expeditions to find Kunlun in the West. Also, both of these
rulers acted as patron to numerous fangshi 方士, “ritual specialists” to concoct elixirs and to
develop other methods of attaining longevity. Moreover, both emperors performed the Fengshan
封禪 sacrifices, first to announce the establishment of an era of peace in the Empire, and second,
as Yü Yingshi proposes, to appeal to Mt. Tai, one of the traditional lords of the dead, and arbiter
of one's lifespan. It is possible that these two Emperors hoped, as is the case in the “Resurrection
of Dan” that this “arbiter of the registers of life and death” would extend their lifespans.\(^{10}\)

It is generally recognized that there was little development of Taoist liturgy at this time,
and Taoism at this juncture was not an “organized religion,” that is, it did not possess social
institutions, its own liturgy, or its own scriptures. Any organization it possessed lay in the hands
of the ruling elite, as the development of the Huang-Lao school and the patronage of Liu An
attests. At this level, it remained as a potential state-cult, and, as far as the earliest sources reveal,
Taoism of the courts of Han China did not seem to possess any mass appeal, nor do the sources
reveal that these beliefs were disseminated to the popular level in an organized fashion.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) The sacrifices of Qinshi Huangdi and Han Wudi are discussed in more detail by Yü (1964/65:91ff).

\(^{11}\) It is likely, however, that Taoist beliefs and practices trickled down to the common people, facilitated by the
fangshi. As mentioned earlier, the fangshi functioned as exorcists or ritual specialists, and served the various
religious needs of the people. By the Qin and the Han, they also became counsellors to the wealthy patrons, the
ruling elite of China, and even Emperors, such as Qinshi Huangdi and Han Wudi. The fangshi were in a unique
position in that they were able to cross over the various levels of society. They thereby latched on to Taoist ideas
and carried them to the popular level, or they transmitted ideas from the popular matrix to the elite. One of the most
detailed and interesting studies of the fangshi is found in Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China:
Biographies of Fang-shi by DeWoskin (1993). Refer to this work for a discussion of this topic.
Regardless, any inkling of an appreciable Taoist liturgy in the popular matrix of the Former Han is impossible to find: it is nonexistent in the sources. Instead, the entire popular matrix remained populated by *fangshi*, mediums, and the household ancestor cults run by the *pater familias*, the head of the household, who functioned as family priest for rituals associated with family cults. In other words, the beliefs of the popular matrix are one and the same as those mentioned in Chapter Two of this thesis, and these practices and beliefs formed the framework for later developments in Taoism.

c.) Taoism in the Eastern Han and Six Dynasties Periods:

Conditions prevalent during these periods contributed to the development of Taoism. The Eastern or Later Han established itself in 25 CE, and after a period of relative stability, slowly disintegrated and China fell into another period of warfare and chaos, which lasted until the Sui unified China in 581.\(^\text{12}\) During the first century of the Later Han, Taoism again prospered under the auspices of the ruling elite, further promoting developments in Huang-Lao Taoism and the cult of immortality.\(^\text{13}\) But this patronage was cut short, this time by the overall decay of the dynasty. By the late first century and mid-second century CE, conditions in the capital and the

\(^{12}\) The Western and Eastern Han are interrupted by the interregnum of Wang Mang 王莽, who established the short-lived Xin 新, or “New” Dynasty, which lasted from 9 to 23 CE. After years of uprisings and natural disasters, the Xin was quickly replaced by the Eastern or Later Han.

\(^{13}\) The most substantial example of Later Han patronage is the previously mentioned case of Prince Liu Ying of Chu, the same person noted for his patronage of Buddhism. To reiterate, Ying according to an Imperial amnesty, in 65 CE donated financial compensation to a Buddhist community in the modern-day provinces of Shandong and Jiangsu. In addition to sponsoring Buddhists, the *Houhanshu* records that “Towards the end of (Liu Ying’s) life, he loved the practices of Huang-Lao” (Maspero 1981:258-9). His contemporary, Wang Chong mentions that he was surrounded by “Taoist Masters” or “Teachers” (Maspero 1981:259). If we take this as an example of what is going on in the rest of China at this time, Taoism received a substantial amount of support. Combined with this, the cult of immortality or longevity continued to develop. One prominent example of this resides in the commentaries of Wang Chong. He mentions that by the Later Han numerous practices regarding attaining immortality existed, such as the performance of the *Feng* and *shan* sacrifices, taking drugs of immortality, ingesting elixirs of gold and gems, practising the “quietism” and “dispassionateness” of Laozi, abstaining from the consumption of cereals, regulating the breath, and even metamorphosing the human body into the shape of a bird (Yü 1964/65:110).
countryside contributed to the emergence of parallel Taoist governments organized along the lines of Huang-Lao Taoism. Moving outside of the elite strata brought Taoism into direct contact with practices found in the popular matrix. This aspect, combined with the growing influence of Buddhism, caused Taoism to redefine itself, first, against popular practices, and, second, against the growing popularity of Buddhism.

Despite the early successes of the Later Han, this period of Imperial patronage was short lived, as a combination of weak rulers and political infighting between consort families, eunuchs, and the Confucian elite weakened the authority of the government. With a backdrop of political intrigue and uncertainty in the capital, the countryside was also rife with its own set of problems, such as a growing dissatisfaction with the government and a series of floods, famines and epidemics. As a result of this chaos, sporadic revolts broke out in China, and between 147-166 CE, approximately six rebellions occurred, most of which hoped to establish an era of Taiping, or “great peace” or “great equality” (Seidel 1969/70:219). All of these rebellions were crushed. At the same time, two Taoist sects emerged to the forefront: first, the Huangjin, the “Yellow Turbans,” situated in Shandong and Henan provinces, which openly rebelled in 184; and, second, the Wudoumidao, the “Five Pecks of Rice” movement in Sichuan and Shanxi provinces, which set up its own government and existed independently of the Han. These two movements, combinations of Taoist and popular beliefs, mark the emergence of a truly organized Taoist religion, complete with a clergy, institutions, and later texts.

The first, the “Yellow Turban” sect, so named as they wore yellow scarves during their rebellion of 184, was founded by the three Zhang brothers, Zhang Jue, Zhang Liang, and Zhang Bao (d. 184 CE). The Yellow Turban sect focussed its beliefs
on the worship of Huang-Lao and the establishment of an era of Taiping, manifest in a heavily moralistic Taoist utopian state. The second sect, the “Five Pecks of Rice,” was founded by Zhang Ling 張陵, later Zhang Daoling 張道陵, no relation to the three Zhang brothers. His grandson, Zhang Lu 張魯 (fl. 185-220), later continued as leader of this tradition. It is said that in 142 CE, Zhang received a revelation from Taishang Laojun 太上老君, the “Most High Lord Lao,” the deified Laozi. Both groups believed that one’s sickness resulted from one’s sins, an “external result of one’s wrong-doing” (Levy 1956:217). To cure sickness, the Yellow Turbans advocated a combination of the confession of sins and the recitation of holy scriptures, combined with the recitation of magic formula over water, which the sinner would drink. As a fee, the sick were required to pay five pecks of grain, hence the name. In addition, sinners would write down his or her name, together with a confession of sins and the wish to be absolved of these sins. Three copies of this contract were distributed to the Sanguan 三官, the “Three Bureaus,” or “Three Officials”: one contract was placed on a mountain to the Tianguan 天官, the “Heaven Bureau”; one in water for the Shuiguan 水官, the “Water Bureau”; and the third buried in the Earth for the Diguan 地官, the “Earth Bureau.” The Sanguan, particularly the Shuiguan, is significant as it later served as part of the subterranean bureaucracy. Its function is explored later.14

The fate of these two sects is different, in that one survived, the other did not. On the one hand, the Yellow Turban rebellion was quickly put down: two leaders of the Yellow Turbans were quickly captured and killed, and the third died of illness. On the other hand, the Five Pecks of Rice sect survived in the relatively isolated area of Sichuan, only to surrender to the powerful Han general Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220) in 215, the same man responsible for the eventual establishment of the Wei dynasty in 220 CE under the rule of his son. In yielding, the Five Pecks

14 Refer to Levy (1956), and Michaud (1958) for the history and details of the beliefs of these groups.
of Rice sect was granted a fair degree of autonomy, and moved to the capital. There, it renamed itself the Tianshi 天師, or “Heavenly Master” or “Celestial Master” sect, and stayed in the capital until 311, when the city fell due to barbarian invasion. The sect moved South, following the court, and thereby disseminated their brand of Taoism, inspiring newer Taoist movements: the Shangqing 上清, the “Upper Clarity” or “Great Purity,” and the Ling Bao 靈寶, the “Numinous Jewels” tradition, traditions that thrived during the Six Dynasties Period. They are discussed later.

Coinciding with the slow demise of the Han, Taoism redefined itself. In general, Taoism was faced with problems on two conceptual levels. First, the eventual decentralization of political power in the Empire forced the Yellow Turbans, the Five Pecks of Rice, and later the Celestial Masters into direct contact, and, later, competition with the thoughts and practices of the popular matrix. On another level, the situation was further complicated by the arrival of Buddhism in China during the first century CE. Faced with the growing influence of Buddhism, Taoism responded by either borrowing some Buddhist ideas or rejecting others. Of the two points, perhaps the most daunting to interpret is the latter, as the subtle presence of Buddhist ideas in Taoist thought is intensely hard to gauge.

First, Taoism was faced with the problem of defining itself in relation to popular practices. In general, most popular beliefs and practices were held in contempt by the ruling elite of China, the aristocracy and the Confucians, as these practices went against the various proscriptions of the established state-cult. When Taoist sects, the Yellow Turbans and the Five Pecks of Rice sects, established rival governments in China, Taoism affected a similar view, in that the top echelon of Taoism still adhered to the same attitudes of the elite, and thereby largely

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\(^{15}\) Refer to Overmyer (1989/90) for a discussion of elite altitudes of popular practices.
condemned popular practices. Conversely, Taoism may have condemned popular practices and practitioners because they were a source of competition. In the words of Nickerson, Taoists used these proscriptions as a way to “remove the teeth” from the practices of their rivals, that is the mediums and diviners of the popular matrix (Nickerson 1994:46).

Recently, several excellent studies of the Taoist reaction to popular practices have emerged. Namely, the studies of Stein (1979), Seidel (1987), Cedzich (1993), and Nickerson (1994) have shed new light on the Taoist worldview of this period. According to these studies, Taoists largely condemned what they identified as “religions (or cults) of demons,” 妖道, or “excessive cults,” 淫祀, cults based on the propitiation of the spirits of the “unlucky dead,” “revenants,” or even minor deities that did not belong to the official Taoist pantheon (Stein 1979:58-59). To explain in more detail, the Taoists identified heterodox deities as “excessive (or unauthorized) demons,” 淫祀之鬼, or “blood-eating demons,” 血食之鬼, for the type of sacrifice they often received (Cedzich 1993:28). These deities were entirely problematic to the Taoists because their worship fell out of their jurisdiction and into the hands of unsanctioned exorcists. To combat the bloody flesh sacrifices to problematic ghosts, the Taoists substituted ritual pledges of gold and silver, and tried to steer the people towards Taoist deities and those Taoists deemed as orthodox (Stein 1979:57ff).

The second problem facing Taoism during the Eastern Han and later Six Dynasties periods was the growing popularity of Buddhism and its subsequent influence on Taoism. This is an intensely difficult problem to approach, as these ideas slowly appeared in Taoism over the centuries and manifested themselves in a variety of different ways. The most substantial study of this topic was initiated by E. Zürcher, in his excellent “Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism: A Survey of Scriptural Evidence” (1980). Based on a survey of early Chinese Buddhist and Taoist
scriptures between the Han and Six Dynasties, Zürcher proposes that there are numerous
categories of Taoist borrowing from Buddhist scriptures and thought. These borrowed themes
may involve stylistic themes found in Buddhist sutras (Zürcher 1980:86;101ff), doctrinal terms
that may or may not have retained original Buddhist implications (Zürcher 1980:87), complexes
or clusters of ideas that more or less maintain the original constituent ideas, but interpreted
according to a different interpretation and function (Zürcher 1980:87), and others. Of all the
numerous Buddhist terms and concepts manifest in the Taoist and Chinese vocabulary, the most
relevant to this thesis concern the doctrines of “morality,” “moral death,” and the structure and
operation of the Buddhist cosmos. Such borrowings include the following: 1.) the cosmological
complexes, including all the Buddhist paradises and purgatorial realms, and the concepts
concerning the division of time, space and the cosmos; 2.) the Buddhist concept of morality,
implying precepts falling under the aegis of the Buddhist eightfold path;16 and 3.) the concept of
karma and retribution and resulting rebirth within the six-gati, or Liudao.17 Obviously, given the
scope and breadth of the influences of Buddhist thought and practices absorbed by Taoism, it is
impossible to address all their various manifestations. Focus, hence, will be placed on the
afterlife and the role of the underworld as revealed in the following “case-studies.”

In sum, the maturation of Taoism from its first appearance during the Warring States
Period to the Six Dynasties is marked by a response to different stimuli. During its first
appearance in the Later Warring States, Taoism, like the other schools at the time, responded to
the centuries of warfare and chaos by providing an alternative governing system of beliefs.

16 This is the aryamarga, baizhengdao: right views, intentions, speech, actions, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and
concentration.

17 To reiterate, they are rebirth as a deity, deva-gati; as a human, manusya-gati; as a Titan, asura-gati; as an animal,
tiryagayoni-gati; as a hungry ghost, pretya-gati; and as a denizen of the underworld, naraka-gati. The concept of the
gati appears as the wudao. It differs from the above in that the asura-gati is not considered.
Following the end of the Qin and the subsequent political vacuum resulting from the demise of the Legalist school, Taoism in the form of Huang-Lao Taoism, fostered a potential ruling doctrine for the state, which was supported in the various courts of Han China. Although eclipsed by Confucianism in the mid-second century BCE, developments in Taoism continued still under the patronage of the elite.

By the Later Han, Taoism underwent its greatest transformation. Whereas previously, Taoism remained for the most part the product of the elite, and existed as a potential state-cult in the form of Huang-Lao Taoism, by the Later Han, the disintegration of a centralized government and the general chaos in the empire afforded Taoism the opportunity to put theory into practice. In doing so, it came into direct contact with the practices of the common people, thereby causing Taoism once again to redefined itself. As applied by the Yellow Turbans and the Five Pecks of Rice sects, Taoism too affected the same disdain for common practices as did the Confucian and elite practices, resulting in Taoist definitions what it considered “heterodox” and “orthodox.” At the same time, Taoism came into contact with Buddhism, and, slowly over the centuries, new ideas, some borrowed directly from Buddhism, became a part of Taoist practices and vocabulary. Hence, the ideas of karma, rebirth, some general notions of the cosmos, and the idea of “moral death” appeared in Taoist thought and practices.

It is, however, too simplistic to say that Taoism merely borrowed Buddhist ideas and incorporated them indiscriminately into its doctrine. Instead, Taoism borrowed Buddhist ideas, some which were already compatible to the indigenous Chinese world-view, and imbued them with their own personality. As argued earlier in Chapter Two, the idea of the afterlife as found in the indigenous matrix, for the most part, centred on the idea of a “neutral death,” a condition in the afterlife with no implications of post-mortem punishment. But, at the same time, it
increasingly viewed the cosmos and the underworld as a bureaucracy, replete with a host of otherworldly officials and offices with the responsibility of confining and managing the dead, an idea that was later easily reconciled to the Buddhist idea of the underworld. Together, the development of these two streams of thought provided yet another set of stimuli for Taoism, and the Taoist response to these factors are examined below.

III. Taoist Cosmology from the Early Han to the Six Dynasties - The Influence of Huang-Lao Taoism and the General Structure of the Underworld:

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, it will establish themes that, although first evident in the Former Han, manifested themselves in later developments of the underworld, forming a thread of continuity found in later elaborations of the topic. Second, it will establish a tentative typology for the various regions of the Taoist underworld as evident in Taoist texts of the periods between the Han and Six Dynasties.

To start, even as early as the second century BCE, Taoism already possessed a fairly complex and elaborate cosmological matrix. The most salient example of this trait is found in two texts dated to the end of the Warring States and Former Han periods. Both are Huang-Lao texts, and the themes expressed in these texts left lasting impressions on subsequent interpretations of the cosmos. The first is the so-called *Huang-Lao boshu* 黃老帛書, the "Silk Manuscripts of Huang-Lao," a text unearthed in 1973, and dated to the period between the late Warring States and early Qin and Han periods. The second text is the *Huainanzi*, a Taoist text dated to as late as 168 BCE, but the date for the composition of the original is contested. Some scholars date the composition to as early as the mid to late Warring States, to the Qin and Han, to the early Han. Peerenboom,
compiled in either 139 or 122 BCE, under the guidance of the previously mentioned Liu An, the "King of Huainan."

As revealed in these texts, the entire Taoist cosmological complex is driven by a number of themes. First, it was, to a great extent, influenced by previously existing motifs established earlier in the indigenous Chinese matrix. In other words, all of the various regions both in the celestial and the infernal regions survive relatively intact in later Taoist cosmological models. Second, these motifs are arranged according to two influential themes: first, "correlative cosmology," and second, ganying 感應, or "resonance." Correlative cosmology implies that each of the various realms of the cosmos, here Heaven, Humanity, and Earth, are similarly patterned. That is to say, any patterns in Heaven are manifest in Humanity and Earth. This is especially evident in the topography of these realms. In simple terms, resonance implies that all the various realms of the cosmos were bound tightly together, forming an integrated whole. In turn, any action performed in each of these realms required a reciprocal response in the other realms. Anything out of place in this worldview violated harmony, and, accordingly, resulted in suffering and disaster. According to Major, the view expressed in the Huang-Lao cosmology, in the Huainanzi in particular, created a "moral universe, in which human actions resonated along the celestial axis to create-literally-good and bad vibrations both in heaven and on earth" (Major 1993:67). In essence, this view is substantially different from the Buddhist idea of a "moral universe" dictated by dharma and implemented by karma and rebirth in perhaps another life. In the case of Huang-Lao Taoism, retribution is experienced primarily in this life, and not the afterlife.

To establish these themes, this section is divided into the following. The first subsection however, tentatively dates the text to the late Warring States and early Han (Peerenboom 1993:12ff).
will overview the principles of *ganying*, “resonance” and the related idea of “correlative cosmology.” In addition, this section will survey the general structure of the cosmos, specifically as related in the *Huainanzi*. This is an important task because this same model appears frequently in later Taoist texts. The second subsection will examine the various infernal regions of Taoism, specifically those found in Taoist texts between the Han and Six Dynasties. In turn, they will be categorized and organized according to a tentative typology. It should be noted that the list, however, is by no means exhaustive. Although it lists the various realms of the underworld, it will not explore the various subdivisions. As will be revealed, to list all the various levels is a daunting task. As the later representative Taoist “case-studies” of this thesis will delve deeper into the nature of the Taoist underworld, this subsection will present only the various names and models of the underworld, and not examine these various models in extensive detail.

a.) The Operation of the Early Taoist Cosmos—“Correlative Thinking” and “Resonance”:

In recent years, scholars have defined the essence of Huang-Lao Taoism as “correlative thinking” or “correlative cosmology.” An examination of these concepts will reveal how Han Taoism viewed the operation of the cosmos. Huang-Lao Taoism, as revealed in these two texts rarely discusses the underworld, and it never mentions post-mortem punishment. Instead, as is the case with pre-Buddhist or indigenous views of the afterlife, the condition of the dead in this worldview focuses predominately on “neutral death.” In general terms, Huang-Lao Taoism took previously existing ideas regarding the cosmos, in particular, perceptions of topography and the general realms of the cosmos and aligned them according to its own theories of the cosmos.

First, the terms “correlative thinking” or “correlative cosmology” implies that a series of “patterns” exists in the cosmos, and, in turn, the success of the state, or lack of, and human
suffering are intrinsically linked to realizing and adhering to these patterns and omens revealed by Heaven. In turn, this concept is embodied in the idea of *ganying*, or “resonance.” In general, *ganying* is the overriding precept that binds morality and immorality to the patterns of the cosmos. All of this, it should be noted, is facilitated by the medium of *qi*. *Qi*, according to the etymology of the word implies “air,” “breath,” or “vapour” or even “pneuma.” But, by the Han it was recognized as the fundamental building-block of the cosmos, a trait that is especially evident in the *Huaiananzi*. As the fundamental constituent of the physical world, *qi*, by extension, operates as the medium through which this “resonance” operates. For example, Major writes “Resonance (*ganying*) between things with in a class is conveyed through *qi*, conceived of as both the basic stuff of concrete phenomena and as a tangible vibrating medium pervading empty space” (Major 1993:28). Hence, in this view, it is everywhere, composes all things, and functions as the “vibrating medium” facilitating communication between the various parts of the cosmos. In turn, blocking communication between the realms, ignoring omens sent down by Heaven, causing irregularities in government affairs, and lacking proper ritual performance led to human suffering in this life:

The nature of the rulers of men penetrate to Heaven on high. Thus if there are punishments and cruelty, there will be whirlwinds; If there are wrongful ordinances, there will be plagues of devouring insects. If there are unjust executions, the land will be redden with drought. If (lawful) commands are not accepted, there will be great excess of rain. The four seasons are the officers of Heaven. The sun and moon are agents of Heaven. The stars and planets mark the appointed times of Heaven. Rainbows and comets are the portents of Heaven (*HNZ* 3:19; trans. Major 1993:67).19

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19 The *Huaiananzi* is hereafter abbreviated as *HNZ*. All passages for this text are found in *Huaiananzi Zhuizi Suoyin* (1992). All translations are found in Major (1992).
In short, harmony with nature and the cosmos implied success, while disharmony implied disaster, which was administered primarily in the human realm. Any retributive punishment is carried out by the “officers” and “agents” of Heaven.

In addition, the concepts of “correlative cosmology” and ganying lent itself to the very structure of the cosmos itself. The clearest manifestation of maintaining this sense of “resonance” with the cosmos is evident in the profound emphasis placed on numerical categories or divisions of the various components of the cosmos. Most of these patterns existed earlier, for example, the numbers two and five, connected to Yin and Yang and its outward manifestations, the “Five Elements,” the Wuxing 五行, wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Other elements of the cosmos are similarly divided according to this numbering scheme and others: the numbers ten and twelve are assigned to the ten Tiangan天干, the “Heavenly Stems,” and the twelve Dizhi地支, “Earthly Branches” of the Chinese sexagenary calendar; eight corresponds to the Bafang 八方, the “Eight Directions,” North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, and Northwest, and also to the Bafeng 八風, the “Eight Winds.” (Major 1993:30); six corresponds to the Liuju 六府, the “Six Departments,” the six “diametrical chords across the celestial circle,” or the six main divisions of the sky (Major 1993:80-82); five corresponds to the Wuxing 五星, the “Five Planets,” Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, the Wuxing, the previously mentioned “Five Agents,” the Wufang 五方, the fivefold division of the Earth, North, South, East, West and Centre, and the early division of the Heavens in the Wuguan 五官, the “Five Palaces”; and four corresponds to the earliest division of the world, the Sifang 四方, the “Four Quadrants,” North, South, East, and West.

By far, the most influential numerical categories centres around the numbers three and, by extension, nine, both which identify the very structure of the cosmos. For example, the Huang
Lao Boshu, expresses this in the term Sandao 三道, Tianda 之道, Rendao 天道, Didao 地道, the “Tao of Heaven,” the “Tao of Humanity,” and the “Tao of Earth.” Nine is manifest in the division of Heaven as the Jiu Ye 九野, the “Nine Fields,” referring to the central area of the sky surrounded by eight portions, with the first portion extending to the East and placed subsequently counterclockwise in a circular pattern: East, Northeast, North, Northwest, West, Southwest, South, and Southeast (HNZ 3:19; trans. Major 1993:69). Regions of the Earth are likewise organized by clusters of nine, for example, the Jiuzhou 九州, the “Nine Continents” or “Nine Provinces” of ancient China. Unlike the Celestial “Nine Fields,” which are arranged as eight portions in a circular pattern surrounding the centre, the Huainanzi writes that the “Nine Provinces” are placed in a 3 X 3 grid (HNZ 4:32; trans. Major 1993:145). In addition to the ninefold division of the Earth, nine and other number correlates are also extended to other categories: the Jiushan 九山, “Nine Mountains,” the Jiusai 九塞, the “Nine Passes,” the Jiusou 九薮, the “Nine Marshes,” and Liushui 六水, the “Six Waters” or “Six Rivers” (HNZ 4:32; trans. Major 1993:145). There are more categories, but they cannot all be mentioned in this thesis.

Despite the elaborate detail of the Huainanzi, there is little mention of the underworld. The text does mention the “Yellow Springs” four times, but only in the context of cosmology and its relationship to the calendar and the movement of the stars and planets. Chapter Two writes this in reference to the seasons, here winter, and various prohibitions against specific acts:

When the yin qi is at its maximum, north is at its furthest extent (from the sun).
The Northern Limit penetrates down to the Yellow Springs. Hence one must not cut into the earth or bore wells (HNZ 3:21; trans. Major 1993:84)

\(^{20}\) HNZ 3:21; 4:38; 16.4:154; 19:205
In sum, there is no mention of post-mortem punishment in these two texts, and human retributive suffering occurs not in the afterlife, but in the present. Hence, both of these traits place the Taoist worldview as in accord with the view of "neutral death" prevalent before the introduction of Buddhism. Despite this, the cosmos became increasing organized according to the bureaucratic motif, popular during the early Han to explain the movement of the stars, one's fate, and the general patterns of the cosmos, ideas that later mixed or competed with Buddhist concepts. These results of these interactions are evident below.

b.) A Typology of the Taoist Infernal Regions from the Han to Six Dynasties:

This section will survey the landscape of the Taoist underworld as mentioned in Taoist texts circulating during the periods between the Later Han and Six Dynasties. As will be revealed, one of the pervasive influences of the Taoist underworld from these periods stems from Chinese origins. In this context, the Taoist underworld relies heavily on models for the structure of the underworld derived from China's animistic past. Hence, such familiar subterranean realms, such as the "Yellow Springs," Mt Tai, and others, figure prominently in the Taoist cosmos. In addition, the overall view of the cosmos as expressed in the Huainanzi, that is the idea of "correlative cosmology," a corresponding set realms divided according to numerology, is also present in later models of the underworld. Further, all of these themes are bound together by the evolving bureaucratic model of the cosmos. In contrast, purely Buddhist models are not present in this context, save for a handful of infernal regions. So, here the Buddhist impact on the overall geography of the Taoist underworld is negligible.
To prove these points, this section will briefly survey the landscape of the Taoist underworld. This section is inspired by Xiao Dengfu, who catalogued various Han to Six Dynasties Taoist texts that mention the underworld. In turn, the subterranean realms mentioned in these texts are placed into fairly loose categories, loose in that they most often overlap, sometimes operating in two categories at the same time. These categories are as follows: 1.) Infernal Realms directly inspired by the “Bureaucratic Motif”; 2.) Realms inspired by China’s animistic past, including Springs, Rivers, Seas and Mountains; 3.) Realms inspired by Correlative Cosmology; and 4.) and lastly, a handful of Realms inspired by Buddhist models. Below, only the names of the major divisions of the underworld are listed. The various subdivisions are not listed for lack of space.

1.) Infernal Realms inspired directly by the “Bureaucratic Motif”:

There are only a handful of regions that can trace a direct origin from the bureaucratic motif. They are as follows:

Tufu 土府 the “Earth Courts” (561); and the Shuiguan 水官, the “Water Bureau.”

This category is entirely problematic, in that practically all of the other infernal regions appearing later in this list adhere to the bureaucratic motif. These models differ from the latter in that its origin is obviously derived from the Imperial bureaucracy of the Human Realm. Also, the “Earth Courts” appears only once in Xiao’s list of texts. In an other article, Xiao mentions that this terms

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22 Subsequent numbers denote source page numbers in Xiao (1989).

23 The Shuiguan is not mentioned by Xiao, but it is found in other Taoist texts. The Water Bureau is discussed later in this chapter and is mentioned in the Zhengao (HY 1010).
refers to other areas of the underworld, most likely Mt. Tai and other Mountains attached to the underworld (Xiao 1987b:91). Thus, it may be only a general term alluding to the various offices of the underworld. In contrast, the “Water Bureau” appears frequently in Taoist texts, and first appears in the practices of the Celestial Masters sect. Of the Three Bureaus, the Water Bureau remains central to practices related to the underworld, a trait that may result to its relationship with the underground streams and rivers, such as the Yellow Springs. These realms, the “Earth Courts” and the “Water Bureau” are mentioned later.

2.) Infernal Regions attached to Nature, including Springs, Rivers, Seas, and Mountains:

This is by far the largest group. For convenience they are divided into four groups: Springs, Rivers, Seas, and Mountains, real or mythical. The first grouping, underworld Realms associated with Springs, draws on the Huangquan, the “Yellow Springs,” for inspiration, which, as discussed earlier, is perhaps the earliest identifiable subterranean realm in the Chinese matrix. The group of infernal regions related to “Springs” is as follows:

Huangquan 黃泉, the “Yellow Springs”; 24 Huangqu 黃曲, “The Bend(s) of the (Yellow) Springs” (567); Huangqu zhi E 黃曲 之阿, “The Banks of the Bend(s) of the Yellow (Spring)” (567); Qiuhan zhi Quan 丘寒之泉, the “Spring of Great Cold” (575); and the Han Ting Quanqu 寒庭 泉曲, the “Cold Court of the Bend(s) of the (Yellow) Springs (568).”

The next grouping draws on rivers for inspiration. As mentioned earlier, rivers, like springs, heavily inspired Chinese models of the underworld. The earliest examples of rivers as forming the basis of the underworld existed as early as the Zhou Dynasty. To reiterate, the Ruo

24 The Yellow Springs is mentioned in the Zhengao (HY 1010), and is discussed later in this chapter.
Shui 若水, the “Ruo Waters” or “Ruo River,” connects the Fu Sang 扶桑, the tree of the East, and the Ruo Mu 若木, the Ruo Tree of the West. These two trees are nodes for the rising and setting of the sun. Along the Ruo River, the various springs rise to the surface, acting as conduits to the underworld (Allan 1991:27ff). Further, Xiao writes that Han grave texts mention different rivers attached to the underworld, such as the Ming He 冥河, the “Dark River,” and Si Ren He 死人河, the “River of the Dead” (Xiao 1987b:96ff). In addition, real rivers, such as the He 河, the Huang He 黄河, the “Yellow River,” also function as abodes for the dead, as does the Ocean. Taoist elaborations of this trait are as follows:

He Hai 河海, the “Rivers and Mountains” (571); He Liang Shan Hai 梁山海, the “Yellow River, Mt. Liang and the Mountains and Seas” (561); Shier Heyuan 十二河源, the “Headwaters of the Twelve Rivers” (561); Si Hai Jiu He 四海九江, “Four Seas and Nine Rivers” (576); Si Du 四瀆, the “Four Rivers (of China)” (they are composed of the Jiang 江, also known as the Yangtze River, He 河, the Yellow River, Huai 淮, the Huai River, and Ji 濟, the Ji River) (575); and the You Ye zhi He 幽夜之河, the “River of the Dark Night (575).”

Mountains also feature prominently in Taoist cosmology. As mentioned earlier, Mount Tai played a prominent role in administering the dead in ancient China. Also, a host of other real mountains functioned in a similar manner. Some of these include Liang Shan 梁山, Mt. Liang in Shandong Province, and the other “Five Famous Mountains of China.” These are all attached to administering the dead:

Mingshan 名山, the “Famous Mountains,” which includes Tai Shan 泰山, Mt. Tai, Heng Shan 恆山, Hua Shan 華山, Heng Shan 衡山, and Song Shan 嵩山 (571); these are also identified as the Wu Yue 五嶽, the “Five Peaks”; the Wuyue Diyu 五嶽地獄, the “Earth-Prisons of the Five Peaks” (This includes the following: Taishan Ershisi Yu 泰山二十四獄, the “Twenty-Four Prisons of Mt.
Tai” (570); Huoshan yu 霍山狱, the “Prison of Mt. Huo”; Xiyue yu 西嶽狱, the “Prison of the Western Peak”; Hengshan yu 恆山獄, the “Prison of Mt. Heng”; Songshan yu 嵩山狱, the “Prison of Mt. Song”).

In addition, mythical mountains also have a significant place in the Taoist underworld as in the traditional Chinese view of the cosmos. The aforementioned Shanhai jing and the Huainanzi mention numerous mythical and semi-mythical mountains that function as gateways to the Celestial and Terrestrial Realms. In later Taoist texts, these mountains are usually placed in the ocean to the East of China: Fengdu 鳌都, not to be confused with the Fengdu of modern Sichuan, is positioned in the ocean in the North-East. Also named Luofeng 羅酆, this mountain is discussed in more detail later:

Bei Feng 北酆 (571); Fengdu 鳌都 (567); Fengdu Han Ting 鳌都寒庭, the “Cold Court of Fengdu” (567); Fengdu Sanshiqi Yu 鳌都三十七獄, the “Thirty-Seven Prisons of Fengdu” (578); and the Fengdu Shan Ershisi Yu 鳌都山二十四獄, the “Twenty-Four Prisons of Mt. Fengdu” (573); Luofeng 羅酆 (571).

Most of the above models involve the Six Palaces mentioned in the Huainanzi. The appearance of Six Palaces in the underworld corresponds with the founding of the Way of the Heavenly Masters. When Laozi invested Zhang Daoling with the “Teachings of the Three Heavens,” the Six Palaces were demoted to demonic realms.

3.) Infernal Regions attached to the system of “Correlative Cosmology”:

25 These mountain prisons are found in HY 1030.54. They are discussed later.

26 This is found in the “Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens,” the Santian neijie jing 三天內解經 (HY 1196). A translation of this is found in Bokenkamp (1997:204ff). This corresponds to the Heavenly Masters attempt at defining heterodox and orthodox Taoism. Perhaps, the Six Heavens originally belonged to popular beliefs and practices.
The next grouping draws on the system of "correlative cosmology" for inspiration. Prominent in this grouping are the numbers eight and nine. Eight is in accord with the Ba Fang 八方, the “Eight Cardinal Directions,” and the Ba Men 八門, the “Eight Gates,” corresponding gates and entrances to the different realms of Heaven and Earth. Nine corresponds to the Jiu Zhong 九重, “Ninefold Heaven,” and the Jiu Ye 九野, the “Nine Fields.” These influences are evident below:

Ba Dong Gui Lao 八洞鬼牢, the “Jails for Ghosts of the Eight Caverns” (579); Ba Fang Dayu 八方大獄, the “Great Prisons of the Eight Directions” (579); Ba Men Jiu You Diyu 八門九幽地獄, the “Earth Prisons of the Nine Darknesses of the Eight Gates” (562); Jiu Di 九地, the “Nine Earth (Regions),” also known as the Jiu Lei 九壘, the “Nine Ramparts,” and the Di Lei 地壘, the “Earth Ramparts”; Jiu You 九幽, the “Nine Darknesses” (563); and the Jiu Lei Jiu You 九壘九幽, the “Nine Ramparts of the Nine Darknesses” (569).

4.) Miscellaneous, including elements influenced by Buddhism:

This division mentions infernal regions that are derived directly from Buddhist models. In turn, they are often combined with other Chinese models. They are

Jiu Lei Qi Wei Tie Shan zhi Jian Shi Da Diyu 九壘七圍鐵山之十大地獄, the “Ten Big Earth-Prisons of the Region of the Nine Ramparts of the Seven Enclosed Iron Mountains” (567); and the Tiecheng Diyu 鐵城地獄, the “Great Prison of the Iron Citadel” (567).

The first, the “Ten Big Earth-Prisons of the Regions of the Nine Ramparts of the Seven Enclosed Iron Mountains,” possesses an obvious Buddhist origin, as Wei Shan 圍山, “enclosing,” or “encircling mountains” is a stock term in describing Buddhist infernal regions (T. 23; 1505; 1506, etc.). Likewise, the Tiecheng Diyu, the “Great Prison of the Iron Citadel” is evident in
Buddhist texts, for example, used in connection with the *Tiecheng da nili* 鐵城大泥犁, the “Iron Citadel of the Great Niraya” in the *Foshuo nili jing* 佛說泥犁經, the “Sūtra of the Buddha's Discourse on Niraya” (T. 186).

Given the elaborate and complex nature of the structure of the Taoist underworld, all the different variants cannot be examined in detail. In addition, the influence of Buddhist ideas related to the idea of “moral death” cannot be examined in this section. In the following, the condition of the dead in the Taoist underworld is examined, along with the extent of Buddhist influence.

IV. The Taoist Bureaucracy of the Afterlife-The *Taiping jing*, the “Scripture of Great Peace”:

The Taoist *Taiping jing* 太平經 (HY 1093), the “Scripture of Great Peace” or the “Scripture of Great Equanimity,” one of the earliest Taoist texts, is our first “case-study” of the Taoist underworld. In general, the overall model of the underworld in this text incorporates themes common to the Chinese indigenous matrix, most of which predate the arrival of Buddhism in China. First, the underworld functions as a “storehouse of the dead,” under the auspices of a bureaucratic cosmos, which isolated the dead from the living, and, in turn, dispensed human suffering in this life by this same government and implemented by the sundry *guishen*. Second, the text frequently mentions the idea of punishing the spirits of individual “wicked dead” in a post-mortem realm. But, here the underworld functions more like the Chinese Imperial government of the real world than its Buddhist counterparts, in that the associated offices and bureaus are responsible for record-keeping, investigating, and even punishing the wicked, either in this world or the next. Further, human suffering is explained as a result of “collective responsibility,” in the form of *chengfu* 承負, frequently defined as “inherited guilt”
or “inherited responsibility.” In simple terms, *chengfu* accounts for the sins of all of the ancestors of an individual, a burden that is visited on the living, often by the ghosts attached to the underworld. Considering this aspect, the role of the underworld sounds no different from its function illustrated in the “grave-quelling” texts of the Han. These aspects will be examined below.

To start an analysis of ideas represented in the text itself, a study of the history of this text is required. The *Taiping jing* is often considered one of the earliest Taoist texts, sitting at a pivotal juncture for Taoism, that is, between the momentum of the Taoist tradition itself, and the growing influence of Buddhism. In general, perhaps no other Taoist text has caused as much interest, and, at the same time, as much controversy as the *Taiping jing*. Since the 1930's on numerous studies have focussed on this text. Yet by 1960, new interest was sparked by Wang Ming's 王明, *Taiping jing Hejiao* 太平經合校, the “Collated Taiping jing” (1960; 1979). In the wake of this work, studies by M. Kaltenmark (1979), B.J. Mansvelt Beck (1980), J. Ostergard Petersen (1989;1990; and 1992), B. Hendrishke (1991 and 1992), and others have revealed substantially more about the Taoist worldview of this early period.

According to this research, the *Taiping jing* is a composite text, composed of different layers dating to different time periods. Traditional history records antecedents of the text as first appearing in the first centuries CE, perhaps even earlier, leading to confusion of the dating of the present version of the text. The traditional view dates the text, or at least antecedents of the text, to the time previous to the Yellow Turbans and Five Pecks of Rice sects. But the reliability of this dating is debatable. Hendrishke, for example, states that there is no hard evidence to support

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27 B.J. Mansvelt Beck discusses some of these early studies. See Mansvelt Beck (1980:170ff) for reference.

28 A discussion of these various antecedents is found in Kaltenmark (1979:20). See this reference for further information.
a Han origin for our present text. Instead, she states that is a composite work compiled and edited by disciples of Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536) of the Maoshan 茅山 or Shangqing school of Taoism, a version of the text that was later edited during the Tang (Hendrishke 1991:1ff).

Petersen, however, proposes that there are three levels to the present version: one dating to the period between 102-105 CE, another not much later than 105 CE, and a third textual layer composed more than a century later (Petersen 1990:212; 1992:142). In sum, the question of the date of the *Taiping jing* and its relationship to the practices of the Yellow Turbans and Five Pecks of Rice is entirely problematic. But, for the sake of this thesis, we will view this text as a repository of Taoist beliefs present during the pivotal early period during the last century of the Later Han and the end of the Six Dynasties period.

According to the *Taiping jing*, humanity had declined into a state of moral decay, which manifested itself in the overall chaos of the late and post Han periods. To alleviate this condition, Heaven sent down a series of texts, the *Taiping jing* included, which were relayed by a Tianshi, a “Celestial Master.” In turn, these texts were to be disseminated to teach humanity the means to avoid imminent disaster and establish an era of *Taiping*, “Great Peace” or “Great Equanimity.” The text discusses how humanity should reorganize the government and society, so both would act responsibly by implementing a comprehensive system of communication within the Human Realm and communication with the other realms of the cosmos, Heaven, and Earth, in essence, ideas mirroring those expressed in the *Huainanzi*. The *Taiping jing* differs from the former, in that moral reform of society is a vital aspect of reforming society, as the sheer weight of accumulated past sins, everybody’s sins and the sins of every one’s’s ancestors, brought about destruction and suffering of the period. In addition to this moral aspect, the text also discusses other diverse topics, such as music, longevity and hygienic techniques, meditation, medicine, a
variety of medical techniques, including moxibustion, acupuncture and others, and even
talisman, and incantations to alleviate suffering and disasters. In sum, the text is complex,
detailed, and comprehensive in relating the worldview of Taoism and its view of the underworld
during this pivotal period.

To establish the overall view of the Taiping jing and its presentation of the underworld,
subsequent subsections are divided into the following topics. The first subsection will survey the
importance of communication within the various realms of the cosmos, and then the overall
structure of the cosmos. The second, however, will examine the Taiping jing's view of morality
and the related concept of "inherited guilt." Once established, the last subsection will turn to the
function of the underworld, with specific emphasis placed on how it punished the "wicked," both
in this life and the next.

a.) The Importance of Communication and the Structure of the Cosmos in the Taiping jing:

The following subsection will examine the Taiping jing's view of the operation of the
cosmos. First, the overall structure and operation of the cosmos in the Taiping jing are driven by
the same concerns expressed in Huang-Lao Taoism, that of resonance and communication
between the various realms of the cosmos. Second, the overall structure of the cosmos, like the
Huang-Lao texts, is divided into three general realms, Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, divisions
that form the framework for the offices and bureaus of the cosmos. The Taiping jing, though,
differs from the two Huang-Lao texts in that the cosmos is so thoroughly structured according to
the bureaucratic motif, that qi, the medium of resonance is, for the most part, superseded by very
tangible representatives of the bureaucracy of the cosmos, specifically offices and officials.

Like the Huainanzi and the Huang-Lao boshu, the idea of "resonance" is the most
prominent theme that drives the cosmos of the *Taiping jing*, particularly in how Heaven expresses its will. There are two visible aspects of this trait. First, communications from Heaven are represented by fairly outward expressions, that is a system of omens in the form of natural disasters and strange events. By responding to these omens, that is recording them, analysing their significance, and taking appropriate action, or even simply paying notice to these affairs, would lessen human suffering in this world. The second expression of the will of Heaven appears in the form of actual scriptures, for example, the corpus of the *Taiping jing* itself. These scriptures manifested themselves in a variety of different ways, such as the *Tianshu*, “Celestial Scriptures,” for example, could imply the *Taiping jing* itself, or even talismanic texts, the “Celestial Contracts,” the *Tianquan*, or “Contract Documents,” *Quanwen*, and even “Sacred Incantations,” the *Shenzhu*, for the alleviation of demonic affliction (Kaltenmark 1979:24). To record both the good and bad actions of individuals, these various offices presided over a series of Writs or Ledgers. They are identified variously as the *SANDAO XINGSHU*, *SANDAO WENSHU*, and even the *SANDAO XING WENSHU*, the “Books of Actions of the Sandao,” the “Records and Books of the Sandao,” and the “Records and Books of Actions of the Sandao,” respectively. Here, the Sandao refers to the three realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. It is apparent that each of the offices of the Sandao, kept their own ledgers and writs of the actions of individuals. Upon death, the offices of the Sandao

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29 The text writes this on the topic: “That by recording all natural disasters and strange events, whether large or small, good or evil, outside or inside, far or near, will cause the Superior Lords with virtue and the multitude of Worthies (xian) (to investigate) the origin of where these disasters and abnormalities arose. As for these strange events and natural disasters, all of these things are images of their (humanity's) affairs and patterned after their actions; in having “affinity in kind,” (yuan lei), they are produced. The multitude of worthies together gather their opinions, and in thinking about this, they extend their thoughts; taking these types of affairs, they will investigate them, and then accomplish this task. Then Heaven and Earth, day by day, will become pleased, and Emperor and Kings will, day by day, obtain great tranquillity” (*TPJHJ*;326; also translated in Hendrischke (1992:75)). All passages from the *Taiping jing* are found in Wang Ming’s *Taiping jing Hejiao*. It is hereafter pleased to as the *TPJHJ*. 
used these records to establish appropriate rewards and punishments for the wicked. Their significance is discussed later.

In general, the overall structure of the cosmos is similar to ideas expressed in the Huang-Lao texts, that is, according to "correlative cosmology." Like ideas expressed in the *Huang-Lao Boshu* and the *Huainanzi*, the *Taiping jing* divides the cosmos into three general realms: Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. Throughout the text, they are referred to as the *Sandao*, the "Three Ways," or even as the *Sanhe*, the "Three Unities." In turn, elements of the cosmos are similarly referred to as clusters of three. Further, the text mentions other groups of three that are to be in communication: *Taiyin, Taiyang, Zhonghe* 太陰太陽中和, "Great Yin," meaning the realm of Earth, "Great Yang," the realm of Heaven, and "Central Harmony," the realm of Humanity, respectively; *Ri, Yue, Xing* 日月星, Sun, Moon, and Stars; *Shan, chuan, Pingtu* 山川平土, the "Mountains," "Rivers," and "Plains"; *Fu, Mu, Zi* 父母子, "Father," "Mother," and "Son"; *Jun, Chen, Min* 君臣民, "Prince," "Ministers," and "People"; and *Dao, De, Ren* 道德仁, the "Tao," "Virtue," and "Humanity" (Kaltenmark 1979:26).

In accord with the bureaucratic motif, this communication was facilitated by the establishment of a detailed system of offices in Heaven and the underworld. When these offices are mentioned, the Celestial Realms are often described according to previous motifs and in government terms, corresponding to the Imperial Government of that time. The most visible example of the use of the bureaucratic motif is the "Four Departments" within the Celestial Government, which scrutinize the actions of the living: the Ming Cao 命曹, the "Department of Fate," which calculates one's life-span (*TPJHJ*:526); the Shou Cao 壽曹, the "Department of Longevity," in charge of granting long-life (*TPJHJ*:546); Shan Cao 善曹, the "Department of Good Deeds," in charge of accounting for one's good deeds (*TPJHJ*:551); and E Cao 惡曹, the
“Department of Evil Deeds,” for accounting one’s evil deeds (TPJHJ:552; Yü 1989:383). The underworld is likewise divided and named according to the bureaucratic motif. The central offices of the underworld are identified as the Tufu 土府, the “Earth Courts” (TPJHJ:579). The “Earth Courts,” in turn, preside over other departments attached to the underworld, such as the Dayin Facao 大陰法曹, the “Communications Office of Great Yin (Earth)” (TPJHJ:579).

In sum, the entire matrix of cosmos here implies a sense of “resonance” between all aspects of the cosmos, facilitated by a bureaucratic cosmos. In it, communication to instruct and benefit humanity and to record virtuous actions and transgressions, transmitting through a system of reciprocating offices. In turn, this emphasis on communication and the bureaucracy lent itself to other aspects regarding morality, the afterlife, and specifically the underworld, aspects examined in the following sections.

b.) Morality and “Inherited Guilt” in the Taiping jing:

As mentioned previously, the Taiping jing is a moralistic text, in that it proposed that present age had fallen into a state of moral decay and this decay could be rectified by moral reform of society. To attain the status of Taiping and to alleviate this condition of corruption and decadence, the text relates a fairly comprehensive moral code. What is interesting about this moral code is that violation and adherence to this code is scrutinized by the various offices of the Three Realms. In turn, these same offices dispense appropriate rewards and punishments to both

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30 According to its function in the Imperial bureaucracy, fu implies “Storehouse,” “Stores Office,” “Court” or “Offices,” “Fifth Class Administrative Official” and even a “Garrison” (Hucker:2034). The most appropriate term here is “Court,” as it contrasts to Guan 官, “office,” of the Shuiguan.

31 Again, the Facao is a term from the Imperial bureaucracy: in the Han it operated as the “Communication Section” in charge of communication among military postal relay sections; by the North-South Division to the Song, as a “Law Section for Legal Affairs”; and, after the Sui, it implied the “Ministry of Justice” (Hucker:1857). Here, the most appropriate translation is “Communication Section.”
the living and the dead. Central to this idea of human suffering is the idea of *chengfu*, or “inherited guilt,” a manifestation of the Chinese sense of collective guilt or collective responsibility.

As a “moralistic text,” the *Taiping jing* presents a fairly comprehensive moral code, which is in turn linked to the ideas of rewards, retribution, human suffering, and post-mortem punishment. Some prohibitions of the code are as follows: 1.) to accumulate the Tao for one's self and refusing to instruct others; 2.) to accumulate “Virtue,” or De 德, and not to instruct or help others; 3.) to accumulate wealth and not to share it; 4.) to despise the Tao, and refuse to study it; 5.) to know what is good and not to practice it; and 6.) to live in idleness and to live off the wealth of Heaven and Earth. Other elements include a lack of filial piety; not to procreate; to eat manure and urine; to beg; to consume alcohol; to despise and to kill daughters; and to practice chastity. Violation of these prohibitions, in turn, blocks communication between the various realms and within the realm of humanity itself. This, of course, violates the entire notion of resonance, in that the communication of ideas is hindered. The prohibitions against chastity, begging, and eating manure and urine are, most likely, reactions against Buddhism. To Taoism, Buddhism was unfilial, as it encouraged monks to leave the family. Further, the practice of the monk's celibacy appeared equally distasteful in Chinese culture as procreation, too, implied filiality. Also, the last two, eating manure and drinking urine, and begging, apparently criticize the Buddhist practices of making medicine from urine and begging for alms (Ch'en 1964:51-52).

All actions, whether good or bad, are recorded by the various offices within the Three Realms. In the next example, passages from the *Taiping jing* follow the fate of the guilty, as his or her actions are recorded and judged. This example records the fate of persons who violate the

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These ethical codes are discussed in the *TPJHJ* (241 ff) and Kaltenmark (1979:33 ff), and *TPJHJ* (654 ff), and Kaltenmark (1979:35), respectively.
Shiling, the “Seasonal Ordinances,” meaning hunting animals out of season. Below, the text discusses the process in which the actions of the guilty are recorded:

At the present, the “Qi of Excellent Goodness and Peace (or “Equanimity”)” (liangshan ping qi 良善平氣) of Heaven-above has arrived. But often it is possible that there are those who intentionally violate the “Seasonal Ordinances,” by injuring others. At the present time, all the various Deities of Heaven-above together record people who enjoy to kill and harm. Those that stalk game, shoot arrows, fish and hunt (out of season) do not follow the Way of Heaven, by not doing good actions, and by enjoying to frequently kill and harm. Heaven greatly condemns them, Earth greatly despises them, and the host of Deities greatly objects to them. In this present time, it is possible that petty people are greatly stupid (jiyu 積愚) and cannot be restrained again, as they are together immersed in their own corruption and have confused the mysteries of the “Sovereign Qi of Peace (or “Equanimity”)” (huangping qi 皇平氣).

Accordingly, at the present, Heaven is in a state of great urgency, and the various sections of Deities gather and record these actions. Just as the sun follows its own course, (these Deities) together record and investigate every small behaviour (TPJHJ:672).

This information is gathered and investigated every three years during a “Medium Investigation,” zhongkao 中考, and every fifth, a “Big Investigation,” dakao 大考, is held, during which the various officials adjust individual lifespan according to one's sins. Further, every three generations, these officials punish the wicked, and every five destroy them.34

33 Jiyu can be read “are accumulating stupidity.”

34 “Every three years, all this is gathered during a “Medium Investigation,” and on the fifth year there is a big investigation. For those transgression that are heavy, there is punishments (zuo 坐); for those that are light, they “reduce their allotted lifespans” (jiannian duosuan 减年多算). Every three generations, they greatly “punish” (zhì 治, lit. “administer, cure, punish”) them, and every five generations destroy them. Accordingly, in the present, all in Heaven-above collects the “Records of the Practices within the Sandao,” and the host of Deities together record transgressions, and decide penalties for those who enjoy killing and harming, and promote happiness. What is above
The text then explains why Heaven decided to send down its communications to the Realm of Humanity. When it continues, it discusses the Sandao Xing Shu and the Sandao Wenshu, the registers to record the actions of individuals, and how separate sets are kept in each of the Three Realms, Humanity included. In this example, it is clear that the various Deities, the shen, act as officials who record and investigate infractions. In turn, these same Deities and the sundry guishen respond to the commands of Heaven and Earth:

From now on, Heaven will promote using the host of Deities, causing them to carry out investigations and punishments of people. Heaven-above also uses the “Records of Actions of the Sandao” to record transgressions. Deities also use the “Records of Actions of the Sandao” to record transgressions. Accordingly, Humanity also has the “Records of Actions of the Sandao” to record transgressions. Accordingly, Humanity has obtained this model from Heaven, and Heaven has obtained this model from Humanity. Heaven, Earth, and Humanity all have these activities, which are modelled in the “Divine and Numinous” (shen ling 神靈), and done while modelled on these affairs and these laws. Accordingly, the “Refined Qi of the Guishen” (guishen jing qi 鬼神精氣) admonish, indeed, admonish [Humanity], and they constantly flourish in Heaven, Earth, and Humanity at the same time. For this reason, Deities act in response to the “Qi of Heaven,” and Spiritual Beings act in response to the “Qi of Earth,” and the gui cause strife in response to human administrations. In these Three Realms, “swift messengers” (jishi 疾使) of Heaven, Earth, and the Central Harmony, act in accord to divine qi; they go back and forth “ceaselessly between the utmost of Earth is also like this. The Perfected are pleased when good deeds are done, and they afterward wish that those of Virtue [enter] August Heaven. They commiserate with the Emperor and the Kings in their sorrow and suffering. When seasonal qi is not harmonious, full condemnations are visited on people who enjoy killing and harming. For all of those who stalk game, shoot arrows, fish and hunt, punishments flourish as often as they disobey the will and meaning of Heaven and Earth. Accordingly, as for a longtime everything is perverse, confused, out of balance, and Emperor and Kings, both early and later, attain sorrow and suffering by this. These are serious transgressions” (TPJHJ: 672).
mysteries” (juedong wujian 絕洞無間), coming and going to places difficult to know of (TPJHJ:673).

As revealed above, a detailed administrative system existed to record, process and judge the actions of the living. It is apparent that the existence of these three sets of documents in each of the Three Realms implies comparison between them, hence, communication. Another relevant aspect concerns the role of the deities and the guishen. Here it is clear that they function as the agents of retribution, carrying out the commands of the bureaucracy, an idea prevalent in the Chinese religious matrix, and obviously still a dominant theme.

Another theme that apparently carries on in this context is the idea of “collective guilt,” exemplified in the idea of chengfu, “inherited guilt” or “inherited evil.” According to the etymology of the characters, cheng implies “to receive an object with both hands and to hold it,” while fu implies the “carrying of loads on the back” (Hendrischke 1991:8). Together, they imply the burden of collective sins of one’s ancestors.

On a superficial level, this idea bears some resemblance with the Buddhist idea of karma, but it differs from the concept in a number of ways. Several scholars have attempted to define the origin of chengfu, and in doing so have questions whether of not it has a Buddhist origin. Hendrischke (1991) and others do not mention the first appearance of this term in Chinese texts in general, making an explanation of its origin difficult. Regardless, it appears as a manifestation of the overall Chinese view of collective guilt. The most plausible theory states that this idea, instead of a loan from Buddhism, is rather a Taoist response to the popularity of Buddhist

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35 Juedong Wujian implies that in their duties there is no place unvisited. Juedong is difficult to translate, being composed of jue, which can mean “to sever, to cut” or “peerless, without match.” Dong is related to “caverns” and by extension “mysteries.” Dong is discussed later in this Chapter.

36 A discussion of the various interpretations of this topic is in Hendrischke (1991:25).
explanations of human suffering and retribution (Hendrischke 1991:27). As discussed earlier, karma resulted from individual actions, and the results, for the most part, delivered to the guilty according to the dictates of dharma, presumably in another life. In contrast, chengfu implies that all results are due to the combined evil actions of all of one's ancestors, and that the immoral actions of ancestors influences the fate of the living descendants manifest as illness, calamity, and death. All of these results, it should be noted, occur in this life, rather than in the next. In addition, this line of accountability from ancestor to ancestor may stretch as far back as thousands of years. The text mentions that cycles chengfu last as long as 30,000 years for Emperors and Kings, 3,000 years for Ministers, and 300 years for the Common People (TPJHJ:22). The text proposes that final accumulation of all chengfu, meaning the combined tally of everyone's “inherited guilt,” created the state of decay and extreme decadence of the period. Here, it is obvious that “guilt” is primarily “collective.” Although, the Taiping jing mentions individual guilt, the combined total influences the fate of all, hence, the chaos of the period.

To eradicate the effects of “inherited guilt,” the Taiping jing proposes a variety of means. First, in accord with the will of Heaven, the Heavenly Master descended to reveal the text and to instigate a program of moral reform based on the distribution of texts, the education of disciples, and the disciples' contact with leading political figures. Also, it desired to secure a responsive government, insure communication between the various elements of society, increase the birthrate, and protect life and nature. There is also mention of Taoist meditation, shouyi 守 — “guarding the one,” a term mentioned in the famous Baopuzi by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343/363 CE) (Hendrischke 1991:18-19). In short, the entire program of eliminating “inherited guilt,” hence imminent disaster, the Taiping jing emphasised a program of moral and social reform,
involving all aspects of society, and not merely the individual. The only exception here is the presence of "guarding the one," an element of personal salvation through practices of the cult of immortality. It seems that in this context individual concerns are slight compared to the needs of society at large. So, regardless of any similarities with the Buddhist concept of karma, it seems *chengfu* is still in line with the concept of "collective responsibility," in that if one sins this ultimately affects the condition of the living in general.

c.) Rewards and Punishment-The Responsibilities of the Underworld:

Despite the emphasis on "collective responsibility" in the *Taiping jing*, individuals are still held accountable for their actions, and rewarded or punished either in the afterlife, or in this life. Regardless of where these rewards and punishments occurred, the bureaucracy of the underworld played an important role. As mentioned earlier, the offices of the underworld are responsible for bookkeeping, that is, recording human actions in a set of ledgers. In addition, it is also responsible for deciding the appropriate fate for the living and the dead. In the case of the living, they could be rewarded for their virtue by living a life free of suffering, and in the end, rewarded by attaining long-life or even immortality. Conversely, the wicked could be punished by a shortened lifespan and affliction from the various ghosts and demons. In the end, they, too, could be punished in the underworld for their individual actions, a point that falls into the jurisdiction of the Taoist underworld.

Indeed, punishments mean little without its opposite, rewards, and rewarding good works is a fairly common idea expressed in the *Taiping jing*. These rewards manifest themselves in several ways: an absence of suffering, a long-life, or even immortality. All of these results are entwined with adherence to moral precepts in the text. In some instances, the *Taiping jing*
records that the virtuous ascended to Heaven in broad day-light, because they
behaved in such a way that their natures were good, their hearts full of light, their
wills never wavered, to goods and profit they paid no attention at all, and their
clothes were coarse and barely enough to cover their bodies. Heaven, appreciating
their virtuous deeds, therefore appointed virtuous deities to keep them company as
well as for their protection, so that they might not be led astray [by demons]. With
love and care of the celestial deities they thus accomplished the feat [of ascension to
Heaven]. After all it is the fashion in which they led their lives that produced this

Similarly, Heaven rewarded the virtuous by granting them access to the various formulas and
techniques for attaining immortality, techniques withheld from mankind because humanity is “so
wicked that [mankind's conduct] is not in accord with the will of Heaven...” (TPJHJ: 138-9; trans
Yü 1964/65:114).

Conversely, the underworld lords over dispensing punishments, both to the dead and the
living. These punishments, though, are conditional in that they are in accord to the dictates of
chengfu and the bureaucratic motif. The next example illustrates the responsibilities of the Tufu,
the “Earth Courts.” First, it is responsible for deciding the length of one's life based on chengfu
or individual actions. Second, the passage illustrates that these offices are responsible for the
recently dead, in that it summons the dead to investigate the records of their deeds in the various
ledgers. It is interesting to note that bureaucratic terminology and procedure appears throughout
the passage. It states

In the “Communications Office of Great Yin” (Dayin Facao 大陰法曹) all
“inherited guilt” to reduce one’s allotted lifespan. After one’s life is complete,
they summon the Spirits of Earthly Yin; at the same time they summon those of
the “Earth Courts” and gather the form and skeleton (of the deceased) to
interrogate the *hun* spirit. At this time, they always present the “Records and Documents” (*Bushu* 簿書), (to see if) they are in accord or not in accord. If the “one being examined” (*zhuzhe* 主者)\(^{37}\) is debauched and selfish, the “punishments and the terms of exile” (*fazhe* 罰譴)\(^{38}\) are decided in accordance to the lightness and severity of what was investigated. If each of the Recorded Writs is not in agreement with what was ordered by Heaven, then the *guishen* and spiritual beings are not allowed to inflict illness on these people. Each time, in accordance with and from the mutually agreed decision, the results are together issued and upheld. If one's transgressions are serious enough to cause death, then as in above and below, the spirit is “banished to work” (*zhezuo* 諡作) in the “Rivers, Mt. Liang, Mountains and Seas” (*He Liang Shan Hai* 河梁山海) in accord to the lightness and severity of the transgressions of the law, so that each [punishment] is in accord with the action done, with nothing omitted. There are “Courts for the Province” (*fuxian* 郡縣) and “Postal Relay Stations” (*youting* 郵亭; Hucker:8085), where the “one in charge” (*zhuzhe* 主者)\(^{39}\) is an “Elder” (*changshi* 長史; or “Aide” Hucker:185), which investigate according to the law, “prohibiting *guishen* and refined (or ‘spiritual’) beings from [inflicting] reckless and early deaths” (*wu wang yao la guishen jingwu* 勿枉天刺鬼神精物)\(^{40}\) (*TPJH*:579).

This passage illustrates that the underworld is in charge of determining the allotted lifespan for

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\(^{37}\) *Zhuzhe* should be read as the “one who presides.” However, this does not fit the context of the text, as the dead’s morality is considered later on.

\(^{38}\) The term *zhe* implies “to blame, to find fault, to disgrace” (Mathew’s:279). Later in the text, this term implies “banish.”

\(^{39}\) Here, the translation of *zhuzhe* is again problematic. The context implies that this is the person presiding over the judgement. It can be read as “if the one being investigated is an Elder, then…” This, however, does not fit the situation.

\(^{40}\) In the text “*guishen* and spiritual beings” is placed after the verb, making it an object. In this case, the translation would be “prohibiting reckless and early deaths to the *guishen* and spiritual beings.” This does not make sense. Instead, in this translation the object is placed after the verb, “prohibiting,” making it and “prohibiting *guishen* and spiritual beings from [inflicting] reckless and early deaths,” a more appropriate translation.
the living. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese of the Han and earlier believed strongly that one's lifespan was predetermined and recorded by the bureaucracy of the cosmos. According to the above passage, one's life can be lengthened or shortened by morality or immorality, and the difference determined in the Earth Courts. Further, this passage shows that the Earth Courts judge the dead, and decide their fate in the afterlife. When a person dies, their spirit is summoned before the courts to examine his or her actions. It is interesting to note, that in doing so, the three ledgers, from Earth, Humanity and Heaven, are compared to see if any discrepancies exist. If discrepancies do exist, then all punishment for the living is delayed, and the various Deities decide the next course of action. Further, the passage if these Writs and Documents are not in agreement, then the spirits of the underworld are denied inflicting illness on these people. This points out that the underworld bureaucracy still lords over the ghosts and spirits in their function as agents of inflicting suffering on the living. Lastly, the passage concerning exile or banishment to the “Rivers, Mt. Liang, Mountains and Seas,” illustrates that banishment and hard labour, punishments practised in traditional China, are likewise applied in the underworld.

It seems here that Heaven does not play a part in this process. Nevertheless, it is assumed that Heaven is at least consulted to compare the Writs and Ledgers that record the actions of the living. Heaven, as mentioned earlier, already presides over punishing by sending down disasters and the living, but it seems that, here at least, it is not involved in punishing the spirits of the dead. This responsibility belongs to Earth as it is the logical abode for the corpse and yin spirits, or “ghosts.”

In determining the fate of the dead, chengfu is the deciding factor. As karma influences the condition of the dead in the Buddhist world, “inherited guilt” determines the treatment of the dead. The next example, rationalizes this concept, in that one's sins return to the guilty and “Your
good deeds beget good deeds, your evil deeds beget evil: it is like ones reflection in a mirror.

Don't you understand your situation?” (TPJHJ: 598). The text continues by commenting on the rationale behind the use of the Ledgers in the various realm of the cosmos, and how they are used to determine one's lifespan. It then describes the condition of the wicked dead in the afterlife, and states that the hun spirit exists either in the underworld, or as a ghost. In both cases, the wicked are punished:

Accordingly, there are documents of good and evil deeds, and these documents are brought together: how is it that long life and not-so-long life are differentiated? For a long time, living persons have understood that there is a limited number of years in one's life. When this allotment is exhausted, one dies, and afterwards becomes a ghost, but they still do not understand control and investigation [of the spirits of the dead]. Evil people die early, and the Earth below (598) flogs and punishes them (lue zhi 擊 治), and castigates them according to what should not have been done. They are made to suffer in a place of suffering, and they do not see a time of happiness. These people become gui, and how is it that only for them there is no time for pardon? These are the most evil, and if, in being a gui, they do evil again, what are they to depend on to stop [their punishments]? Their families will be without food, and they will beg for a living, in accord with their diminishing qi. By themselves, they cannot exist for long, as the realm below the Earth, indeed, desires to obtain good gui who do not commit evil. Thus, it is fitting that all are mindful of the good, and do not neglect their order; only this is proper. For those who do not do this, what hope is there? Should people unify with these plans and policies, and share the same wishes for all? Surely Heaven will be good to them and as for the contrarily treat them badly. Those people who are evil in action, cannot for long see Heaven and Earth, Sun and Moon, the Planets and Stars. They are accordingly stored in the underworld, and not enabled to share in the happiness of the good gui, from whom they are distinguished. (TPJHJ: 598-9).
The real importance of this text lies in its mention of the fate of the wicked dead. It first mentions that the wicked deserve to die early, and that Earth-below flogs and punishes them. This, like the earlier examples, is in accord to paradigms existing in the Imperial court system. This illustrates that the dead must suffer for their wrongdoing, and that their families likewise suffer. Even if they exist as a ghost, the family also receives appropriate recompense in that they apparently wander the earth, begging for food. In turn, the dead will not receive proper offerings as an ancestor.

In sum, the entire matrix illustrated by the *Taiping jing* demonstrates that the cosmos operates according to the two concepts of resonance and the bureaucratic motif, ideas emphasised in the *Huainanzi*. In its function, the underworld presides over a series of Ledgers that recorded the good and bad actions of the living, in turn alter the lifespan of the living. Upon death, all of the spirits of the dead are summoned before these courts for investigation, and, if evil, punished according to the established norms of the real world, that is, they are beaten, flogged, or even exiled to labour in the various regions of the underworld. So thorough is this emphasis that the underworld and its responsibilities are described in government terms, and even previously established subterranean realms are aligned according to these ideas, even the aforementioned Yellow Springs.\(^1\) Also, the underworld is responsible for doling out punishment for the living, in that it sanctioned ghosts and deities to afflict the wicked. As a result, the *Taiping jing* straddles the functions of both “neutral death,” in that it operated as a “storehouse of the dead,” and “moral death,” as it punished the wicked in the afterlife. Related to this topic, the idea of collective

\(^1\) On this topic the text states this: “Some of the living share the same desires as the Tao of Heaven, while the evil themselves lessen their years: should we not be careful? The words of the Holy People all received Heaven’s response, and they do not resent themselves. The longest period of life is given to those who do good, and they use up all of their years given to them by Heaven: the evil go down and enter the Yellow Springs; ponder this, ponder this, and don’t falsely transmit (the teachings)” (*TPHJ*:566).
morality or collective responsibility exists at the same time as does individual responsibility. As revealed in the doctrine of *chengfu*, responsibility is collective in that all the various sins of the individual living are pooled together to determine punishments for society at large. Any individual concerns, hence, seem secondary to the collective, in that there is little mention of relieving individual suffering.

The lack of mention of attaining individual relief is surprising as sources outside of the *Taiping jing* indicate that individual suffering can be alleviated by direct appeals to the various offices of the underworld. The *Sanguozhi* 三國志, the "Record of the Three Kingdoms" (third c. CE.), mentions that the Way of the Celestial Masters possessed a fairly elaborate process for appealing to the Shuiguan, the "Water Bureau." According to their beliefs, sickness was a result of one's sins, most likely afflicted by ghosts. To alleviate this affliction, the sick person confessed his or her sins, and writing them down, submitted three copies of this confession to the Sanguan, "Three Bureaus," or "Three Offices," of Heaven, Earth, and Water. The text writes that the lowest levels of the Taoist hierarchy were responsible for praying for the sick. The ritual of prayer was that the sick person's name was written down, along with the statement of confessions of his or her sins. One was sent up to Heaven and was placed on a mountain; one was buried under the earth, and one was sunk in water. These were called the "handwritten documents of the Three Offices" (the "Three Bureaus").

This type of individual appeal is not mentioned in the *Taiping jing*. As indicated earlier, any connection between the Way of the Celestial Masters and the *Taiping jing* is probable but not certain: scholars are not entirely certain if the text expresses their beliefs and practices. Further,

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the lack of mention of similar practices in the text can be explained by the *Taiping jing*'s emphasis on the collective overall reform of society. Individual concerns, such as those above, do not fit in its model of moral reform.

Lastly, as one of the earliest texts of Taoism, the *Taiping jing*, represents a fairly complex view of human suffering and post-mortem punishment, encompassing both “neutral” and “moral” aspects of death. One the one hand, the underworld is responsible for controlling the spirits of the dead, while, on the other, it is responsible for the punishment of the wicked dead. In both of these aspects, it functions in accord to the bureaucratic motif, and ideas established early on in the history of China. In the next case-study, concerning the underworld in the *Shangqing* tradition, these same tendencies are evident, as the underworld in this context again functions like the government. The following case-study is different in that there is more emphasis on petitioning the officials of the underworld to alleviate ghostly affliction.

V. Appeals and Litigation in the Afterlife-The Shangqing Tradition and the Underworld:

The next case study focuses on the function of the underworld in the *Shangqing*, the “Upper Purity,” or “High Purity” sect, also known as the Mao Shan school of Taoism. Throughout the Shangqing texts, the underworld is identified variously as the island mountain Fengdu, or Luofeng. It is also associated with the San Guan, the “Three Bureaus” of the Celestial Masters school, specifically the Shui Guan, the “Water Bureau.”

The Shangqing tradition is based on a series of revelations received by the figure Yang Xi 楊義 between 364-370. Little is known of Yang Xi, only that he was a client of the Southern aristocratic family, the Xu, a family connected with the influential Ge Hong, the author

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43 It is also identified as the Liu Tian, the “Six Heavens,” Taiyin, or “Great Yin,” and the Ye Cheng, the “Citadel of Night” (Strickmann 1979:180).
of the *Baopuzi* 抱扑子. According to the history of this school, the school's founder, Lady Wei Huacun 魏華存 (251-334), and a number of semi-legendary immortals from China's past, including the Mao brothers of the Former Han, who gave their name to Mao Shan, a mountain near modern-day Nanjing, visited Yang Xi to deliver their messages. The Shangqing tradition flourished during the time when the Celestial Master's school moved South with the Imperial Court. When the Celestial Masters attempted to consolidate its control in the South by defining Taoist orthodoxy and heterodoxy, in response, the Shangqing declared its own supremacy by declaring its tradition had access to the Shangqing Tian 上清天, the "Heaven of High Purity," a Heaven higher than the Celestial Master's "Three Heavens." By the fourth century, the school gained popularity in the South, and at that time it produced possibly its greatest practitioner, thinker, and organizer, Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536), a member of the Xu and Ge clans. One of his most relevant contributions is the *Zhengao* 鉴詔, the "Proclamations of the Perfected" (HY 1010). In general, the overall message of the Shangqing tradition focussed on the concerns of the Ge, Xu and Yang clans and how members of these families attained the status of immortality, Further, it did not possess a broad-based appeal: even the patriarchs were reluctant to disseminate their texts.⁴⁴

In recent years, the Shangqing tradition has garnered a lot of attention, often for its meditation practices. Scholars such as Strickmann (1977; 1979), Robinet (1993), and Bokenkamp (1996a; 1996b) have written extensively on the tradition. Most of these authors focus on the alchemical and meditation techniques used to attain longevity or immortality. In

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⁴⁴ Strickmann writes “For in fact the central message transmitted to the Yang and Hsü's (Xu's) was that they and theirs belonged to a saving remnant of humanity, destined to survive the cataclysms already discernible as marking the approaching end of the old order. Yang and Hsü's were among those destined to live on, or even beyond death, and to become members of the hierarchy of the Perfected in the new age that would soon dawn” (Strickmann 1977:12).
general, these techniques frequently centre on soul-flights, involving complex and elaborate visualization techniques practised during meditation. In a meditative state, the adept visualizes his or her body as possessing cosmological correlates, indicating that an extension of correlative cosmology is at work here again. In the process of meditation, the practitioner transforms the body into the entire cosmological matrix, and thereby journeys through the various realms.45

Like the “Earth Courts” of the Taiping jing, the Six Palaces of Fengdu are also responsible for the maintenance of the dead spirits, and, in lording over the dead, the Six Palaces still adhered to the bureaucratic motif. In the underworld, for example, the writs and ledgers of one's fated life are held, and upon death, summon all the spirits of the recently dead to this realm for investigation, in which their cases are reviewed. The spirits then proceed to the various realms of the underworld, some for punishment, and some for reward. In a other words, this place functions also as a “storehouse of the dead,” a place to confine problematic ghosts, and a place for appeal to stop their incursions into the realm of the living, a procedure that, naturally, adhered to bureaucratic procedure. This aspect exists to such an extent that the Water Bureau, in particular, functions as court for settling disputes between the living and the dead. In addition, as Fengdu is an office or court responsible for the ledgers of life and death, it is intrinsically linked to longevity and immortality practices, in that this area became the logical destination for applying for extensions to one's life.

45 The Shangqing tradition adhered to the belief that the “five organs,” correspond with the Five Elements and the directions within the cosmos: wood with the liver and East, fire with the heart and South, earth with the spleen and the Centre, metal with the lungs and West, and water with the kidneys and North. The “Seven Stars” of the Big Dipper are likewise linked to the body: the first star is associated with the heart, the second with the lungs, the third with the liver, the fourth the spleen, the fifth the stomach, the sixth the kidneys, the seventh the eyes. The most detailed study of these methods is found in Robinet (1993).
There are two texts relevant to this section. The first is the *Beidi fengdu liugong dusifa* 北帝酆都六宮度死法, the “Method of Overcoming Death by the Six Palaces of the Northern Emperor of Fengdu,” found in the *Shangqing tianguan santu jing* 上清天關三圖經, the “Shangqing Scripture of the Three Diagrams of the Celestial Passes” (HY 1355). This text is primarily a meditation manual, outlining one method of attaining immortality. The second text is the *Zhengao*. Edited by Tao Hongjing, the *Zhengao* is a detailed compilation of various earlier revealed texts, combined with Tao’s own commentaries. The *Zhengao* includes, among other things, descriptions of the underworld, and examples of how the underworld functions.

The first text, the “Shangqing Scripture of the Three Diagrams of the Celestial Passes,” teaches the adept how to transform the body into the cosmological matrix to thereby journey to the various offices of the cosmos. In doing so, the practitioner petitions the appropriate deities, and, if successful, attains the status of an immortal. The text is significant as, in describing the journey of the adept, it relates the cosmological landscape, particularly the Six Palaces of the city of Feng, or Fengdu.

The program of the meditator is as follows. The ritual process begins with purification and prayers on the part of the adept, performed on days 1, 3, 8, 31, and 39 of the Chinese 60 day cycle. On these days, it is believed that the deities held court, a time when these offices received various deities and immortals. At this point in time, the adept could petition these officials to obtain immortality. After seven years of similar exercises, and if the adept is deemed worthy, the adept is greeted by a Jasper Carriage that takes the adept through the “Celestial Passes,” the Tian

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46 This section is summarized from a translation of the text found in Kohn (1993:257ff.).
Guan 天閉, to eventually attain an audience. The main presiding deity in this text is Yudi 玉帝, the “Jade Emperor,” here the deity responsible for granting immortality. If the adept is accepted into the ranks of the immortals, then his or her name is added to the Jade Register, the role of Immortals. Once completed, the adept journeys down to the infernal regions, the Six Palaces of Fengdu. At this point, the text describes location of the Six Palaces:

Mount Fengdu is in the North in the land of the Celestial Stem Gui. Therefore, the Northeast is the Portal for Ghosts and the root of dead qi. The mountain is 2600 li tall and its circumference is 30,000 li. The Mountain Grottoes (shandong 山洞) begin (10A) under the Mountain and it is 15,000 li in circumference. Its top and bottom both have Palaces for the Ghosts and Spirits. On the Mountain there are Six Palaces, and in the Grottoes there are also Six Palaces. Each Palace is 1,000 li in circumference. These are the Palaces for the Ghosts and Spirits of the Six Heavens (Liu Tian Guishen zhi Gong 六天鬼神之宮) (10B).

The term Shandong requires attention. The term "dong" literally means “cave,” “hollow,” “depth,” “to go across,” and “to communicate,” and in the Taoist tradition, "dong" concealed the treasures of life, the holy texts and protective talismans, and are connected with the travel from one “Grotto” to another (Robinet 1997:132). In essence, they imply and function as conduits between the sacred and profane, in turn, potential sources of holy information. The Palaces of Fengdu, hence, are situated on these conduits, connecting them with the rest of the cosmological matrix.

Following these descriptions, the text lists the names of the Six Palaces:

The first is called Zhou Yue Yin Tian Gong 周絕陰天宮;
the second Tai Sha Liang Shi Zong Tian Gong 泰殺讐事宗天宮;
the third, Ming Chen Nai Fan Wu Cheng Tian Gong 明晨耐犯武城天宮;

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47 *Gui* 癸 is the last of the Ten Celestial Stems, implying North and Water (Mathews' 362).

48 *Li* 里 is a Chinese measure for distance comprised of 300 or 360 paces, which translates to about 400-450 metres.
the fourth, *Tian Zhao Zui Qi Tian Gong* 括昭罪氣天宮；
the fifth, *Zong Ling Qi Fei Tian Gong* 宗靈七非天宮；
and the sixth, *Gan Si Lian Wan Lu Tian Gong* 敢司連宛屢天宮” (11A).

The significance of these names is entirely problematic, as no secondary source supplies an
description of them. Further, scholars seem hesitant to translate them, and only a few have tried,
with various degrees of success. Kohn translates them as the “Dark Heavenly Palace of Infamy
and Death,” the “Ancestral Heavenly Palace Where all Faithfulness is Killed,” the “Military
Palace Where Even the Morning Light Has to Endure Offences,” the “Heavenly Palace of
Thoroughly Shining Energy of Guilt,” the “Heavenly Palace of the Seven Misdeeds of Ancestor's
Souls,” and the “Heavenly Palace of Frequently Repeated Presumptions of Office,” respectively
(Kohn 1993:265). Thompson translates the name of the first Palace as the Palace of “Cutting-
Short-Traces-of-Yin” (Thompson 1989:40). Strickmann, however, writes more about the origin
and meaning of the Six Palaces, stating that, like the Celestial Masters, the Shangqing believed
that their present age was under the “violent reign of the Six Heavens, administrative
headquarters of the immortal dead” (Strickmann 1977:12-13). Also, “martial spirits, dead
generals of old,” that is deified local gods of the popular matrix staffed the Six Palaces
(Strickmann 1977:13). If this is the case, then the incompetent and cruel Zhou Xin 紇卒, the last
king of the Shang, is most likely associated with the First Palace, making the translation of title
the “Celestial Palace of Zhou (Xin), of Strong (jue 絕) Yin.” The only other Palace that can be
identified with some certainty is the second, the *Tai Sha Liang Shi Tian Gong*. The character sha
殺 implies “killing” and in the *Zhengao*, it is found in the context of describing ghosts. In other
Taoist texts, *sha* is used to describe “harmful demons (or 'ghosts').”49 Hence, the name of the Second Palace can translated as the “Celestial Palace of Great Killing (Ghosts) in the Service of the Ancestors.” Other than these few exceptions, the other palace names cannot be translated with any certainty. Hereafter, the names of the Palaces are left in the Chinese.

When the text continues, it mentions the presiding official of these realms, the Northern Emperor, Bei Di 北帝, and the function of the Sixth Palace. Here, the passage tells that this Palace is responsible for “naming the dead,” or by extension, “summoning the dead,” *ming si* 名死 (11A). That is, it is responsible for determining the end of one's life according to the various registers, and calling the dead to these offices.

Then, it writes that the ruler of this region is inclined to reward those who accomplished travelling to these regions by granting them immortality (11A). Once immortality is granted, the adept is invested by this deity with the position of a sanctioned exorcist and supplied with a series of talismans to cow and subdue troublesome ghosts:

> After you have travelled and passed through this, you should gnash your left teeth together nine times, call out the names of the Six Palaces, and recite this invocation:

> “I am an official of the Sovereign Lord. My name is in the 'Registers of Jade Purity.' Below, I control the Palaces of Ghosts for the Northern Monarch of the Six Heavens. All of this is under my administration. With this as what I administer, what Ghosts would dare live here? On my right I wear at the waist [the talisman] “Booming Fall.” On my left I hold [the talisman] “Fire Bell,” with which I can cast fire 10,000 li. With this awesome power, I govern 10,000 spirits! If there is a violation, I slaughter! If there is an offence, I punish! If the Sovereign Ruler gives me orders, I arrest them ceaselessly!” (11A).

49 Refer to *Chisongzi Zhangli* 赤松子章歷 “Master Redpine's Almanac of Petitions”:20A (HY 615); trans. Nickerson (1998:261; 271 n.1), of reference. This text is discussed later.
At this point, the ritual procedure is complete, and the benefits of being invested as an exorcist and immortal are revealed:

If [carried out] like this, all is finished. If you recite this once then a Celestial Brightness terrifies and disturbs 10,000 “Demons” (*mo* 魔), who are then restrained and punished. If you recite this three times, then ghosts and monsters are completely eradicated. Within these Six Palaces, peoples’ death names are cut off and at the Celestial Passes, people pass through. Those living at the “Southern Apex” (*nanji* 南極), in their studies do not know the names of the Palaces of Fengdu (11A), where the Ghosts and Spirits are governed. They do not study how to cut off and block the (gate of) the root of death. So of 10,000 [of them, none] will become an Immortal. The task of travelling to and crossing over the Seven Stars is complete (11B).

Lastly, the text mentions that once given these powers, then the adept can “cut off people’s death names” *jue ren si ming* 絕人死名. This action, therefore, adds yet another dimension to Taoist religious practice, that of appealing for the release of others from an early death, or even for their immortality. In this function, the Taoist adept operates as a legal representative in the cosmological bureaucracy for others, elaborations that are discussed later.

The same cosmological matrix explained above is further described in the *Zhengao*. Whereas the former text is sparse in detail, the following elaborates on the matrix in greater detail, for the reason that the *Zhengao* is not an instructional manual, but, rather a collection of texts supplemented with commentary. It, accordingly, sheds more light on the Six Palaces of Fengdu, or Luofeng.

In general, according to the *Zhengao*, these Palaces possess numerous responsibilities.

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50 The idea of southern continents at the Southern Apex and other areas in the world is present in early Chinese texts, such as the *Shanhai jing*, and others. Refer to Robinet (1993) for reference.
One of its primary concerns is summoning and processing the newly dead. In summoning the dead, proper and meticulous care is exercised to avoid summoning the wrong person. Persons with similar names, those that died prematurely, or violently, are all gathered and processed in these realms to see if the right person was summoned or their death justified. In turn, all the virtuous and potential immortals are likewise processed and separated, so they can continue their practices and later obtain the status of an immortal. Lastly, there is again a strong “exorcistic” tendency attached to this text, an aspect mentioned above.

First, the Zhengao, like the “Method of Overcoming Death by the Six Palaces of the Northern Emperor of Fengdu,” identifies the location of Fengdu and how the various Palaces are organized. First, it mentions that Mt. Luofeng is situated in the “Northern Region of Gui” (Zhengao 15:1A). But, Tao Hongjing’s commentaries provide greater detail, attaching a more definite geographical location for Mt. Luofeng, that is “directly opposite of the North shore of Youzhou and Liaodong and in the centre of the Northern Sea. Only, I do not know how many 10,000 li it lies offshore” (Zhengao 15:21B). Here, Youzhou 幽州 implies the area surrounding modern-day Beijing, S. Manchuria, and parts of N. Korea, and Liaodong 遼東 the present-day peninsula on the South of Manchuria and West of Korea. But, according to Tao’s commentary, it lies far off-shore. The text then describes the Mountain itself, and that there are two sets of Six Palaces: one set on the surface and one set underneath the surface. The first is the “Outer Palaces” (Wai Gong 外宮), the other, in the “Middle of the Grottoes,” are the “Inner Palaces” (Nei Gong 内宮) (Zhengao 15:1A). According to official or government terminology, the terms Wai “outer” and Nei “inner” and denote distinctions between positions inside and outside the Imperial Palace (Hucker: 7573). Inner implies those that work within the Palace itself, while Outer implies the Officialdom at large (Hucker: 7576).
The commentary mentions that the Six Palaces are the residences for a variety of different deities, who presided over the dead. The list includes typically Taoist deities, the “Ghost King of Northern Fengdu,” Bei Feng Gui Wang 北酆鬼王, and the “Great Emperor of the North,” Bei Da Di 北大帝, for example. In addition to these Taoist figures, Buddhist personalities are also present, such as, Yanluo Wang 閻羅王, “King Yama,” the Buddhist Lord of the Dead, and the “Great Deity (or Deities) of the Five Paths,” Wu Dao Da Shen 五道大神. It is possible that here the “Five Paths” refers to the “Five Gatis” established by Buddhism.\(^5\) But, as Tao admits, he doesn't really know who this deity is. It is interesting to note that these personalities apparently held the position of “Lord of the Dead,” as if it were a temporary posting, in that the office stays the same, the personalities do not:

These are, of course, the dwelling places of the “Ghost King of Northern Feng(du)” who judges guilty people. Must the spirits must pass through here? This is where Lord Yama resides. Now this king is the “Great Emperor of the North.” But, I simply do not know of the “Great Deity (or Deities) of the Five Paths” and who they are. All the categories living and reborn, upon death, without exception, belong to them (the two sets of deities) (1B).

Further, the commentary mentions that the Six Palaces are not the only realms for containing the dead. In the commentary, Tao directly refers to Diyu 地狱, that is, the “Earth-Prisons” in general. In this passage, other previously mentioned infernal regions are mentioned: Mt. Tai, the Yellow River, and the Seas. In addition, it writes that the all the various “Offices, Agencies, Postings, and Departments,” cao ju zhi si 曹局職司, presumably those attached to the different post-mortem realms, are responsible for “Records” of the deceased, that is the ledgers of

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\(^5\) To reiterate, the Five Gatis or Five Paths of Destiny or Rebirth are rebirth in the infernal regions, rebirth as a hungry ghost, animal, human being or as a deva.
one's deeds, and the extent of one's lifespan:

As for the location of these Earth Prisons, they are not, in any event, located in a single place. Indeed, Mount Tai (Tai Shan 泰山), the Yellow River (He 河), and the Ocean (Hai 海) all have Prisons located in them. As for the outer Palaces of this mountain, it is appropriate that the various Offices, Agencies, Postings, and Departments preside over controlling the Records (of the Deceased: Wenbu 文簿). The Inner Palaces in the Middle of the Grottoes are the final dwelling places (of the spirits) and where they are interrogated and punished (1B).

Given the complex relationship between these different Earth-Prisons, the maintenance of these Records within the context of bureaucratic procedure was bound to cause problems, as no bureaucracy is without errors in book-keeping. To avoid summoning a wrong person of the same name, when the dead first arrive to the underworld, their “papers,” “records,” or “documents” are immediately checked:

A recent writer stated that there are people who died and came back to life. He also said that they first travelled North and went to the Palace Offices where they check one's papers. Perhaps this resembles having one's documents checked at a city gate. It is possible that they only arrived inside the Outer Palaces on the Mountain top. This is similar to Hu Wuban 胡毋班, who travelled to the place of the Lord of Taishan Prefecture. He also did not realize he was in the middle of the grottoes. It is possible that these guishen were confused, and did not manage to understand the reality of the situation and that's all (1B).

The possibility of a wrongful death summons is a common theme expressed in literature circulating during this time, literature which illustrates that the Chinese blamed “near-death experiences” on faulty record-keeping in the afterlife. As revealed in these texts, frequently, the underworld returned the recently dead back to life for a variety of reasons: because the

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52 Hu Wuban of the Later Han and native of Taishan is discussed by Thompson (1989:40).
bureaucracy mistakenly summoned someone of the same name or physical appearance; because being assigned to a posting in the afterlife, they were inept; because they recommended a better candidate for the posting in the afterlife; because they knew someone in the bureaucracy able to return them back to life; or because they successfully bribed difficult doorsmen of the underworld (Campany 1995:351).

So, to avoid this dilemma, standardization is required. This is handled by the First Palace, a place where the Northern Emperor resides. Also, this Palace itself lords over the other subterranean realms, standardizing the judgements and punishments of the other realms. The following passage states

(The First Palace) is the palace were the Northern Emperor governs (the ghosts). Accordingly, after (dying), it is necessary for all to pass through its gates. (The relationship between this place the other Prisons) resembles the prisons of the present provinces and prefectures. Even though these areas initially maintained their own rules, in the end they had to submit to their superiors to standardize the rules regarding punishment (2B).

To avoid this dilemma, the Second Palace receives people who die according to their fate and those who die prematurely, that is not according to their fated death. Also, it functions as an abode for “tormenting ghosts,” shagui 煞鬼, ghosts who afflict the living. Further, the commentary explains that all of the records of these people must be checked in case of a bureaucratic mistake, that is if the wrong person is summoned. If so, then the dead can be granted a new life:

This Palace occupies the position of exclusively presiding over gathering the “tormenting (ghosts).” It is possible that the ledgers of those who died suddenly and those that died violently may not have been correct, and in some cases those with the same surname This is why when they first come here, they are
investigated and questioned (2B).

There is little mention of the function of the other Palaces. The Third Palace, for example, is only described as a place for “when virtuous people and sagely people leave this world, they first must pass through Bright Morning (Celestial Palace) which is the Third Celestial Palace.” There, they “receive their orders.” The Fourth Palace, though, weighs one’s potential condition in these Palaces based on their previous actions. Once considered, the “Celestial Palace Ghost Officials of the Lord of the Northern Bushel (or Big Dipper),” Tian Gong Gui Guan Bei Dou Jun 天宮鬼官北斗君, decide the fate of the dead:

One’s misfortune and fortune and one’s good and bad luck (for their term in the Palaces) are calculated according to their guilt and harm done during their live’s, done according to Tian Zhao, which is the Fourth Celestial Palace, and the rule of the “Celestial Palace Ghost Officials of the Lord of the Big Dipper.” In the midst of these, there is the Ghost Official of the Northern Bushel (2B-3A).

The text continues with long descriptions of various family members and various important historical figures, the latter with whom the Xu and Ge clans claimed a relationship. Strickmann argues that the claimed relationship with the latter intended to bolster the legitimacy of their claims as a inheritors of a new order after the end of the old order (Strickmann 1977:12). Regardless, the descriptions of these figures illustrate that the offices of the underworld, in addition to its other responsibilities, operated as a place for attaining salvation. Strickmann writes that the some deceased ancestors of these clans were able to enter “the cavern palaces deep within the earth and continue their studies there,” or some became “agents-under-the-earth,” dixia zhuze 地下主者, perhaps administering the spirits of the dead, and eventually climbing
to higher ranks as an immortal (Strickmann 1979:181). 53

In short, the subterranean matrix plays a pivotal role in the Shangqing tradition. As discussed above, the prisons of Fengdu are central in immortality practices, both for the dead and the living, exorcistic practices, and confining and punishing the dead. One aspect not mentioned above concerns the relationship between human suffering and the underworld, or how the underworld influenced human affairs, and the condition of the dead in these realms. These aspects are discussed in the next subsection.

b.) The “Water Bureau”-Human Suffering and the Underworld in Shangqing Taoism:

Whereas the above subsections discussed immortality techniques and the management of the dead, this subsection will discuss the Shangqing portrayal perception of human suffering and its relationship with the underworld. As established earlier, the Chinese religious matrix perceived that human suffering was dispensed, for the most part, according to family lines in that the effects of the sins of one’s ancestors are often visited on the living by the various guishen according to the rules and regulations of a bureaucratically organized cosmos.

Like the former examples, retribution or punishment of the living is decided in the offices of the Netherworld, but the Shangqing tradition is more expansive than the Taiping jing in that it records more personal instances in which the dead sued the living for wrongs committed against them or their family. According to “collective responsibility” and associated retribution decided in the offices of the underworld, the various courts and officials hear and judge cases of the dead against the living. Called zhongsong, or “sepulchral plaints” by Nickerson (1997), or

53 Strickmann records several aspects of attaining immortality in the afterlife. See Strickmann (1979) for reference.
simply “tomb cases,” these cases often involve unsolved or wrongful death, improper burial, or other slights instigated by the living against the dead. If the accuser is judged as right, then the ghost of the dead can rightfully afflict the living. In turn, the living could likewise appeal the verdicts and stop supernatural retribution. Further, it functions as a place to judge the dead, and if appropriate, a place of punishment. Below are two examples of the of these “tomb-cases.”

The first law suit involves the settling of the authenticity of a text and the investigation and punishment of the wicked dead. The text centres on a certain Hua Qiao 華僑, who apparently wrongly discussed xuwu 虛無, sīnyā, “emptiness,” or “non-being.” In this example, the youngest of the Mao brothers, Mao Xiaojun 茅小君 “Young Lord Mao,” one of the legendary founders of the school of the second and first centuries BCE, reveals that Water Bureau judged Hua Qiao, who revealed an unauthorized “Celestial Text” or “Revelation.”

The Zhengao writes

Lesser Lord Mao, on an undisclosed day, of the fifth month said these words:

“The Hua Qiao [wrote] an unauthorized revelation, which wrongfully discusses sīnyā. Then, today the father of the Hua family was interrogated by the Water Bureau. Hua Qiao’s being mistaken about the Tao was because Hua relied on superstition and confusion, which broke and destroyed his will and intention. As for the Maidens Hua Tuan 華團 and Hua Xi 華西, the Three Bureaus, accordingly, tried their views, and after the investigation, found them without error. Qiao, thereupon, obtained “death guilt” (sizui 死罪), and consequently because of his “name writs” (ming jian 名簡) he was seized quickly. He was examined and beaten about the head and body in the Water Bureau. Could it be that these mysterious examinations of these families did not have these person’s names?” (Zhengao 7:5B).

54 Literally, Hua Qiao louxie Tianwen 華僑漏洩天文, translated as “Hua Qiao [wrote/distributed] an unauthorized Celestial Text.”
Following the investigation, the spirit of Qiao was found guilty, that is obtained "death guilt," and appropriately beaten for the transmission of false and misleading doctrines. It is interesting to note that other members of the Hua family, Hua Tuan and Hua Xi, are likewise investigated. The text does not reveal that they are also dead, but it is likely that they are. In the end, they are cleared of charges, indicating that the guilt of one, at least the suspicion of guilt, extends to other members of one's family, illustrating that here, "collective guilt" is again at work. The final comment of the text is interesting to note, because by putting forth a rhetorical question of doubting whether or not the Water Bureau possessed the appropriate "name writs" for the case, questioning the efficiency of this bureaucracy. Like other bureaucracies in the real world, those of the underworld likewise made mistakes.

The second example of Shangqing "tomb cases" also centres on "collective guilt," here, retribution for murder committed by a deceased member of the Xu family, one of the patron families of the Shangqing. In turn, the affects of his actions are visited on his descendants, either the dead or the living. Here a member of the Xu family, Xu Chao 許朝 (ca. 268-322), violently killed two people, Zhang Huanzhi 張煥之 and Qiu Longma 求龍馬, when Xu served in the Nanyang Commandery 南陽郡. In the Water Bureau, the victim sued the entire Xu family, both the living and the dead. For retribution, the recently deceased Xu Dou 許斗, the wife of Xu Mi 許謙 was forced by the decision of the Water Bureau to return to her grave mound to choose a child of the Xu to "be weakened" by ghostly influences, perhaps her own ghostly influences. The Xu family, thereupon, issued their own appeal:

As for Xu Chao, he violently killed one of the Labour Section (Gong Cao 公曹; Hucker:3489) of Xinye Prefecture (Xinye Jun 新野郡), Zhang Huanzhi. Further,

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55 The location of this event is related in Tao's commentary (Zhengao 7:6B). Further, Nickerson comments on additional information regarding the case, and translated the first sentences of the text (1996:236ff).
(Xu Chao) also killed Qiu Longma. These people all attended the examination assembly. By the time that this was informed to the Water Bureau, the Water Bureau forced Xu Dou (5B), ordering her to return to her grave mound to spy on the household's gates, and then to weaken a son. Simply desiring to block this and to release herself from these impositions, she presented these cases. Dou, on an undisclosed day of an undisclosed month, received her response. Then, Lord (Yangxi)\textsuperscript{56} received his mandate, and at this time was able to control or destroy 10,000 ghosts, and broadly regulate 1,000 deities. He, moreover, only wanted to assume responsibilities as a Lord, and desired not to influence other affairs. Accordingly, on the day he visited Dou's tomb, he reviled and put into order the "official documents" (huan 煒) etc, regulating the edicts of the Left Bureau. He had them again seek and examine this investigation, and, with thunderous awe, destroyed the contentious origins (of the affair). This should not have been promulgated. At this time, he said 'I falsely used the majesty of Lord: I did not know if it was appropriate for a Lord to come, investigate, put in order, and destroy them, that's all.' All traces of the ghosts were destroyed, and indeed all that of the affair was quickly and suitably solved." Given by the Lesser Lord (Mao), during the day and night of the sixth month and sixth day (Zhengao 7:7A).

In response to these afflictions, Lord Yang takes matters into his hands, and launches a countersuit. Lord Yang, invested with his mandate uses this authority to rectify the situation, by appealing the Water Bureau's decision, and eventually exorcising the problematic ghosts and chastising Xu Dou. Further, it seems that despite the sins of Xu Chao, the entire Xu and Yang clans, by virtue of their position as patrons of the Shangqing tradition, possessed great authority in the Shuiguan when they launched counter-suits on behalf of their family.

Another, albeit later, Taoist text provides more detail about the ritual relationship

\textsuperscript{56} He is referred to as the "Lord" Jun 君 throughout the text. The commentary though reveals his identity (Zhengao 7:6A).
between the living and the subterranean offices. The *Da Zhongsong Zhang* 大冢詣章, “Great Petition for Tomb Cases,”57 found in the *Chisongzi zhangli* 赤松子章歷, “Master Redpine's Almanac of Petitions” (HY 615), a Celestial Masters text dated to the sixth century CE (Nickerson 1997:232), is perhaps the most complete record of this type of ritual interaction. It is a significant text in that it is a ritual manual describing the procedure for expelling ghostly forces through appeals to the various offices of the underworld. In essence, it involves all of the beliefs and practices mentioned previously.

The text begins with describing the reasons for using such a device. The text mentions that patrons of the ritual would instigate this procedure when “the auspices of the house are in disastrous decline, and the members of the household have been burdened with successive illnesses,” and that their “activities are unprofitable; their dwelling is unquiet” (*DZ* 5.19A; trans. Nickerson 1997:261). Further, it notes that these sufferings are brought about by the condition of their ancestors, perhaps as far back as the seventh or even ninth generation.58 In turn, the malice of the dead is brought about by indignity they suffered, either in this life or the afterlife:

Perhaps it is a plaint over burial on a spring, or over a funeral's having encroached on a god's temple. Perhaps it is a plaint over a grave having been dug into a cavern, or over a coffin having been damaged. Perhaps it is a plaint over old sepulchres lying atop one another, or new sepulchres striking against one another. The months and years having passed long away, the heirs would be unaware [of the problem]. Perhaps it is a plaint over drowning in water, or being burned by fire, or wounding with vermin, or poisoning with drugs. Perhaps it is a plaint over

57 Hereafter, identified as *DZ*.

58 The text says “Now, Judging by the appearance of the situation, one might seek out the [plaint's] roots in a rough fashion. One must suspect that, among his ancestors to the seventh generation, or his forebearers to the ninth, among his close relatives or his near kin, [there was someone who,] since when alive his or her trespasses were excessive, after death became subject to all manner of inquisitions and punishments. His descendants having yet to redeem him, in the darkness he is crying out bitterly” (*DZ* 5.19a; trans Nickerson:232).
weapons and imprisonment, or plague and ulcers. Perhaps there are paternal uncles or brothers, or paternal aunts, nieces, nephews, or sisters, infecting each other in succession and causing calamities and harm (DZ 19B; trans Nickerson 1997:261-62).

When this section finishes, the ritual continues with the “Invitation of the Offices,” or “Invitation of the Officials” (qingguan 請官). In sum, the text summons a cadre of Celestial Officials, and a variety of civil and military subordinates attached to the various offices, twenty-four in number, corresponding to the twenty-four prisons attached to Fengdu, the infernal regions addressed in this text (DZ 19Aff; trans. Nickerson 1997:262ff).59

Near the end, the text provides a list of pledges offered to the various deities summoned in this ritual. It includes forty feet of figured purple cloth, one bushel and two pecks of Destiny Rice, twelve hundred cash, one set of pure clothes for wearing (during the ritual), one hundred and twenty sheets of deposition paper, two sticks of ink, two brushes, one ounce of cinnabar, one scholar's knife, a pure mat, and one pure turban (DZ 23B; Nickerson 1997:270). All of these are offered for incentive to the various officials of the cosmos. It is assumed that the Taoist priests, in their stead, accepted these gifts as payment.

In sum, the underworld of the Shangqing tradition adheres to the same practices prevalent in pre-Buddhist China. It differs, though, in the extent to which these beliefs and practices are refined. As illustrated above, the underworld, especially the Six Palaces of Fengdu, functions as an elaborate “storehouse of the dead,” which processes the dead by verifying that the proper person is summoned at the end of his or her life. In turn, it administers these spirits while interned in this region. Also, the idea of “collective responsibility” remains central to its operation, as human suffering still is dispensed by the various ghosts according to the past sins of

59 The text alludes to twenty-four sets of officials, but only lists twenty-three (Nickerson 1997:239).
one's ancestral lines. The function of the Shuiguan, the "Water Bureau," though represents an elaboration of these same themes. Here, it seems that it assumed the function of a court to settle disputes between the dead and the living, in which "tomb cases" or "plaints" are proposed by both parties, often with Taoist priests intervening on behalf of the living to alleviate afflictions instigated by ghosts. In addition, the attainment of immortality is the ultimate reward or ultimate salvation, and this can be attained by both the living and the dead, with the latter attaining this usually in the underworld. Further, one family's salvation, or even an alleviation of suffering in this life, coincides with a family member's assumption to the status as an immortal. Hence, any salvation follows familial lines, as illustrated by the case of Yang Xi relieving the suffering of the Xu. Also, the spirits of the wicked dead are punished, but only after the deliberations of the courts of the underworld. If guilty of "wickedness," as in the case of Hua Qiao, or guilty of wrongfully afflicting the living, they are accordingly punished, often interrogated, flogged, and in some cases destroyed. The dictates of the Buddhist dharma do not function here, and neither does the overwhelming sense of moral reform evident in the Taipingjing.

Lastly, here there is no real hint of a "Purgatorial" underworld, that is a temporary abode for the wicked dead, a place where they would be purified, and eventually released. The only "purification" appears in the context of the practices associated with attaining immortality: any salvation in the context of the underworld seems to be the responsibility of the individual dead. The living do not seem to be able to attain the release of these wicked souls by offering "suffrages," or transferring merit, as in the Buddhist case.

VI. The Taoist Underworld as a "Purgatory":

The last "case study" of the Taoist underworld to be discussed here is the Huanglu Zhai
The Huanglu Zhai is a product of the Lingbao 靈寶, or “Numinous Jewels,” tradition that emerged during the late fourth and early fifth century CE, in Jurong 南容 Southeast of modern Nanjing 南京. Recent studies, such as Ofuchi (1974) and Bokenkamp (1983), and a few located in studies related to the overall history of Taoism, such as Schipper (1993), Bokenkamp (1997) and Robinet (1997), have investigated the origins of this tradition. These studies record that the Lingbao emerged shortly after appearance of the Shangqing tradition, and is in fact indebted to it. Like the other traditions, the Lingbao texts are “revealed,” here revealed by the Yuanshi Tianzun 元始天尊, the “Heavenly Worthy of the Primordial Beginning.” The tradition maintains that Ge Xuan 葛玄, the uncle of Ge Hong (284-343), author of the Baopuzi, received these texts.60 Scholars though reject this lineage, claiming that Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫, the grand nephew of Ge Hong, wrote and distributed these texts, perhaps prior to 402 CE (Bokenkamp 1983:440-441).

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60 This account is related in Bokenkamp (1983:434).
The original texts are held together by several general themes. First, these texts, in comparison to the previous Celestial Master and Shangqing texts, are more syncretic in nature, in that they draw on a variety of different traditions, popular, Taoist, and even Buddhist, as sources of inspiration. Second, in comparison to the other traditions, the Lingbao emphasises more the attainment of the “salvation” of all living creatures than the previous Taoist traditions, a trait which Robinet attributes to the “infiltration of Buddhism into Taoism” (Robinet 1997:151;153). This emphasis manifests itself in large scale public rituals related to curing illness, again believed as a result of ghostly or demonic affliction, maintaining the welfare of the state, and, in the case of the Fast of the Yellow Register, attaining the release of tormented spirits in the underworld. Despite the presence of a substantial Buddhist influence, typically Taoist elements still exist, specifically the profound emphasis on ritual performance framed by the bureaucratic motif, evident in the system of petitions to the gods of the underworld.

To establish both the influences and the dominant presence of “moral death” and the bureaucratic metaphor, the next subsections are divided into the following. First, the condition of the wicked dead in the underworld and its relationship to morality, specifically moral codes, will be examined. Second, the next subsection will examine the Fast of the Yellow Register itself. A study of this ritual will reveal that the two paradigms of the bureaucratic metaphor and the Buddhist interpretation of salvation, exist side by side, in fact, complementing each other, thereby, establishing distinctive characteristics of Taoist salvation rituals.

a.) “Moral Death” and the Condition of the Dead in the Lingbao Underworld:

One aspect missing in the previous examples of the Taoist underworld is the segregation of the wicked dead within the underworld itself. As discussed earlier, the Buddhist portrayal of
the underworld thoroughly linked individual actions to conditions and punishments in the underworld as explained in the context of morality and a moral code. One example of this trait is the previously mentioned “Sūtra of the Remembrance of the True Law,” which portrayed those guilty of various crimes as suffering in exaggerated states of torment and in different levels of the underworld segregated according to their crimes. The Taiping jing and the Shangqing texts, in contrast, link morality with post-mortem punishment, but not on the same scale as Buddhist versions: in this context, most of the dead go to the underworld, but all are not punished there. The appearance of a truly “moral death,” especially a thoroughly miserable and terrifying existence for the wicked dead, in Taoist texts did not occur until the late fourth century with the Lingbao’s conscious attempts of borrowing Buddhist ideas. By borrowing Buddhist ideas about post-mortem retribution, such as karma, rebirth, and others, the Taoist underworld became substantially changed. To illustrate these changes, this subsection will examine one Lingbao text, the Taishang xuanyi zhenrenshuo santu wuku quanjie jing 太上玄一真人說三途五苦勸誡經, the “Scripture of the Most High Mysterious Unity Perfected One’s Discourse on the Precepts Concerning the Three Paths and the Five Sufferings” (HY 455), one of several early Lingbao texts that discuss the condition of the dead in the underworld.

The composition of the earliest Lingbao corpus has been reconstructed to fair degree of certainty by Ofuchi Ninji (1974), and several of these texts are related to the condition of the dead in the underworld and their salvation. The earliest commentary of Lingbao texts is the Lingbao zhenwen shibu miao jing 靈寶真文十部妙經, the “Wondrous Scriptures in the Perfect Script of Lingbao in Ten Sections,” by Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477). Discovered in a cache of texts from Tunhuang, this catalogue mentions twenty-seven texts that can be identified as authentic early Lingbao texts, dating back to the time of Ge Chaofu, that is the late Fourth and
early fifth centuries. Of the twenty-seven texts, several are linked to beliefs regarding the underworld: the *Zhihui shangpin dajie* 智慧上品大戒, the “Major Precepts of the Upper Chapter of Wisdom” (HY 457), which discusses various abodes for the dead and methods to obtain release for the spirits there (Bokenkamp 1983:481); the *Mingzhen ke* 明真科, the “Ordinances of the Luminous Perfected” (HY 1400), an exposition of the former text, which lists meritorious deeds, harmful actions, and how to attain release from the underworld (Bokenkamp 1983:481); the *Wuliang duren shangpin* 無量度人上品, the “Upper Chapters of the Limitless Salvation of Humanity,” or simply the *Duren jing* 度人經, “the Scripture of Human Salvation” (HY 1), a text concerned with alleviating human suffering caused by demonic affliction, relieved by the use of “inner” or “hidden names” of various demons and deities (Bokenkamp 1983:482); and the *Sanyuan Pinjie* 三元品戒, the “Precepts of the Three Primordials” (HY 456), which discusses the Three Bureaus which judge the dead and a list of crimes that fall under their jurisdiction.61

Dating to the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the “Scripture of the Most High Mysterious Unity Perfected One's Discourse on the Precepts Concerning the Three Paths and the Five Sufferings” is one of the earliest Taoist texts that relates moral action with gruesome punishments in the underworld. It is moral in that it lists crimes and their appropriate recompense in this realm. Throughout the text, these punishments are described in gruesome detail, a trait substantially different from the relatively simple punishments in the *Taiping jing* and Shangqing texts.

Included in this text are a variety of Buddhist motifs set beside typically Taoist ones. Rebirth and post-mortem punishments are the most prominent of these Buddhist influences. But,

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61 The dating and reconstruction of these texts is found in Ofuchi Ninji (1974:33-56; Bokenkamp: 1983:485).
what is truly interesting about this text is how Taoists rationalized these concepts to suit their own needs and incorporated them according to their own worldview. For example, previously established Taoist cosmological models, such as the “Eight Directions,” typical Chinese punishments, flogging, exile, and hard labour, remain prominent in the text. Further, given that this is one of the first Taoist texts to emphasize post-mortem punishment to such an extent, it is conceivable that Buddhist precepts would appear in the text. Instead, the prohibitions and crimes, in fact, relay primarily Taoist concerns, not Buddhist ones. In short, not only does this text discuss the nature of the Lingbao underworld, it also speaks volumes about Taoist morality and the social problems faced by Taoism at this time.

The text begins as a dialogue between a deity, identified only as the “Tao” as in the “Way,” and a host of deities from the various areas of the cosmos. The character Tao is never truly explained, and is most likely a personification of the Tao itself. When the Tao first speaks, the Tao mentions the formation of the cosmos and humanity and how the world fell into such a state of decay. The text then relates that the Tao journeyed through the “Eight Gates” and witnessed the suffering of the “dead hun spirits.” Curious about their condition, he relates to the “Flying Celestial People” (feitianren) of each of the eight gates the condition of the dead, and then asks how they came to such a state. Each of the eight commentaries are patterned the same, in that the Tao mentions that he travelled through a specific gate, followed by a description of the suffering of the spirits and the reasons for their suffering. The first commentary, that of what the Tao saw through the East Gate, starts

The Tao said: “I once passed through and saw all the Heavens. When I travelled out through the East Gate, I saw the children, men and women of the common people. Their mouths and faces were full of pus, rotten, and stinking. This flowed out from their throats, descending to their bellies and dangling like a suspended
When the Tao asks what these spirits did to deserve this, they reply that they spoke evil words and slandered the Tao:

These sinners, in their former lives, spoke evil words. They, with red tongues, criticized the Way and Virtue, and attacked the foundations of the Teachers, and, moreover, slandered and attacked each other. Or, they killed and harmed; they are without the Tao. They did not think of all the living creatures, and their actions were cruel. Because their actions and minds harboured dark evil, they killed and slaughtered without limit and with overpowering jealousy and envy. (1B).

After suffering in such a state, their punishment continued. as for “10,000 kalpas,” the text writes, these people “are reborn in the gati of non-humans” (1B).

The next realm visited by the Tao is the West. Tao describes their condition in the following manner:

Creatures with ox-heads and creatures with the bodies of beasts pulled out these people's tongues, and with iron awls stabbed them. “Strong officials of numerous Heavens” (jutianlishi 巨天力士) with iron canes, randomly interrogated without any restrictions to the number [of people interrogated]. Peoples' bodies were full of pus and ruined. Never again will they obtain the form of a human. Their feet were placed on top of “Knife Mountains” (daoshan 刀山). The pain was intolerable pain and injuries too unbearable to watch (2A).
These persons are punished primarily for violating and going against the Tao, in that they laughed at the Tao, attacked the teachers, bargained with deities that, most likely, did not belong to the Taoist pantheon. Further, it comments on drinking, and how excessive drinking is to be avoided. It is interesting to note, that if this is a Buddhist text, drinking alcohol would have been banned altogether:

These sinners, during their former lives, practised that which was not in accord to the Tao. They defied the Teacher's orders, made light of "Three Jewels" (sanbao; the Tao, Scriptures, and Teachers), and what their mouths affirmed, their minds denied. They attacked the Teachers, and they cursed, reviled, swore, and made pledges with the shengui ("spirits and ghosts" or "holy ghosts"). They drank excessive amounts of wine, and their lusts never ended. Or, they slandered the good, praised the evil, condemned and attacked worthy people, and flattered and harmed the loyal and good. They destroyed peoples' lives (2B).

Further, for 10,000 kalpas they are reborn "in the frontier, in a barbarian country, where they have the form of a human, but not the feelings of a human" (2B).

The condition of the wicked dead beyond the South Gate is next described. This time their bodies are naked and burned and they eat embers:

Their naked bodies were without clothes, and they swallowed fire and ate embers. By this fire, their heads and faces were roasted. Scorched, and burnt, their entire bodies were ruined and rotten. Never again will they obtain human form. Their heads wore an iron cauldron, and their feet rested on a "Fire Mountain" (huoshan 火山) The pain was unbearable pain and the interrogations cannot be looked on (3A).

Persons confined to this regions, in previous life, committed vocal crimes, criticized Taoists, or killed animals, and butchered animals for profit:
These sinners, at times during their former lives, were liars and deceivers (lit. "spoke with false throats and double tongues"). They criticized Taoist priests, and attacked worthy people. They were not kind, not filial, not humane, and not loyal. They cursed and shamed their parents and six relatives. They injured each other, or boiled and killed the “Six Types of Domestic Animals” (liuxu 食畜 horse, ox, goat, pig, dog, and fowl), or destroyed and harmed the lives of beasts. To get a moment’s good taste they swallowed fiery food. They didn't reflect on their past lives. Or, they butchered, sold, sliced and scraped numberless animals (3A).

For recompense, for 10,000 kalpas they are “reborn within the Six Types of Domestic Animals” (3A).

Beyond the North Gate, the wicked are punished by alternating periods of extreme heat and extreme cold, sometimes dragged into a cauldron of boiling broth, and sometimes forced to endure cold:

Their forms were naked and their bodies red. Regardless of big or small, they were together dragged into the middle of a cauldron of broth. Their bodies endured boiling and soaking in the juices of one hundred poisons, which was poured on top of them, so their head, hands, and feet were rotten and ruined with unbearable pain. Afterwards, they entered into the “Pool of the Frozen Spring” (hanquan zhi chi 寒泉之池). Or, they entered into the Northern Prisons, where their necks and feet were chained with fetters and their bodies endured interrogations and floggings. As the darkness enclosed them [as if they were] behind layers of cages, they did not witness the Sun, Moon and the Stars. (3B).

The wicked beyond the North Gate are punished for a variety of sins. Some murdered their lord, falsely testified against the innocent, or desecrated Taoist temples:

During the former lives of these sinners, with their hands, murdered their lord and father. They schemed against the foundations of the Teacher's prohibitions and
killed people. Or, they relied on strength to restrain the weak. They harmed friends, and attacked good people. In informing the offices and bureaus, they were unjust and unfair to the innocent. When these crooked people submitted petitions, they were hateful, so that this pervades Heaven. Or, they were naked and exposed under the Sun, the Moon and the Stars, defiling the world rulers. Or, they destroyed “tranquillity huts,” “spiritual temples,” and “diocese temples” (jingshe 靜舍, lingguan 靈觀, and zhitang 治堂). Or, they stole scriptures without sanction and transmitted them. Or, they falsely slandered the orthodox literature, and attacked and ruined precious essays. Or, they burned and corrupted the Celestial Scriptures, and made light of the numinous perfected. Their guilt is deep and heavy. (4A)

Following this punishment, they are reborn in the midst of the “Six Types of Domestic Animals. Or, they became one of the inferior types of people, deaf and blind and having a myriad of afflictions, or attain the form of a non-human” (4A).

In the Northeast, the wicked likewise suffer. This time, they are enchained, and are forced to move a mountain while treading on “iron pins,” among other punishments:

Their bodies were shaved and cut, and held in chains and shackles. They were burdened on their backs with a mountain, which they carried stone [by stone] back and forth, [walking] on top of iron pins. To eat and rest is impossible, for they could not stop night or day. Both large and small dragged each other, and an uncountable number of people laboured and were covered with embers, [in pain] unbearable to see (4B).

They suffer here because, in a former life, they were wealthy and abused their position. They bullied people, or became bandits and corrupted and debauched others, specifically family members:

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62 These three terms imply different types of temples. The first term, the purification huts for the ill to reflect on their illnesses, originates from the Way of the Celestial Masters. Lingguan may refer to general Taoist temples, and Zhitang, which implies “diocese temples,” again, most likely, originates from the Celestial Masters tradition.
These sinners, in their former lives, were wealthy and privileged. They bullied and terrorized the humble and destitute, and, by force, stole people's property. They killed and harmed people. Or, they became bandits, and, moreover, attacked others. Or, they robbed people of what they loved, debauching people's wives and concubines, and alienating mothers from children. Or even (made) the six types of relatives commit incest with their closest relatives. (5A).

For recompense, for 10,000 kalpas, they are "reborn in the midst of cows and horses" (5A).

In the Southwestern portions of the cosmos, the naked bodies of the wicked are forced to embrace copper pillars, out of which tongues of fire emerge to lick their bodies. Also, wild animals from Taishan attack their bodies and eat their flesh:

Their forms were naked, and their bodies red. Their bodies embraced copper pillars, and on the top of these pillars, "tongues of fire" (lit. "fire needles"), pricked their chests and backs, and the wild beasts of Taishan ate their flesh. Their feet stood on top of iron thorns. Both large and small, were dragged through this. Never again will they obtain human form. They were painfully beaten and covered in embers, which is unbearable to see. (5B).

These people suffer here because, in a former life, they were thieves, and did not respect the teachings of the Tao:

These guilty people, at times during their former lives, forcibly stole people's food, thereby diminishing people's lives. They borrowed without returning, and cheated the 10,000 creatures. Or, by using strength, bullied the weak, and sought and grasped without being satiated. When they obtained occasional joy, they could not overcome anger and suspicion. Moreover, they attacked people, revealing their evil hearts. Or, they disrespected the Venerable Elders, and ridiculed the poor and sick. Or, with naked bodies and revealed forms, offended and defied the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars (5B). They did not revere Heaven and Earth, and did not fear the guishen (6A).
Further, for 10,000 kalpas, they are reborn into the midst of the “lower types of humans, working as servants.” (6A).

In the Southeast, their bodies are shaved and cut, and they are engulfed by darkness. Every day, three times a day, they are beaten and randomly interrogated. Further, in parallel with Chinese legal practices, the guilty are exiled to the wilderness, moving earth and stone, to fill the passes of the Rivers and Seas:

Their bodies endured shaving, and were seized by the darkness, which enclosed them like layered cages, so they couldn't see the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars. They were in the midst of the Five Peaks, and during one day, were flogged three times by an iron cane, and randomly interrogated. They are there for a limitless time. When their guilt (6A) is decided, then the dead hun spirits are exiled, transported to all the mountains, and, with earth and stone, filled up the passes of the Rivers and Seas. Both large and small, dragged each other through the Five Sufferings, which they thoroughly encounter. They are covered in embers, (and suffered) difficulties and poisons unbearable to see (6B).

These guilty people committed crimes that went against Taoist orthodoxy. In particular, these sinners challenged Taoist authority by practising rituals attached to popular beliefs. The text mentions that these persons engaged in bloody sacrifices of the wu, or shaman. Prohibitions, or better yet condemnations like these, illustrate the same problems encountered by Taoism when it came into contact with popular practices, that is, the same problems discussed by Stein (1979), Cedzich (1993), and Nickerson (1994), namely competition with popular practices and resulting problems with the centralization of religious authority. In general, these practitioners are portrayed as blocking the Tao, corrupting Taoist teachings, and committing all sorts of appalling crimes:
These guilty people, in their former lives, killed living beings to make improper sacrifices, and offered this to the “demons of the shamans” (wugui 巫鬼). They slandered and laughed at the Taoist teachers, and slandered the Perfected Ones. They rejected the teachings and entered into the false, and turned their backs on the teachers. They cursed the Tao and swore at the good. They “let their hair be unravelled” (bei tousanfa 被頭散髪), and when looking up to Heaven and engaging the Deities, prayed with hate and without the Tao. They occasionally desired to kill people. Or, they made light of the Sun and the Moon, and cursed the Stars and Constellations, then made their own teachings. They did not believe in their former lives. Or, they broke open the Mountains and blocked the Springs, and severed and restrained the Holy Tao. Or, they dug up people's tombs and coffins to take out people's clothing and possessions, and cruelly exposed their white bones, abandoning them to the grasses and wilderness. They laughed at those who did good, then said they are right with overwhelming jealousy. Their hearts harboured dark evil.

Following these punishments, they are “reborn in the midst of poor people, and their bodies encountered six extreme (illnesses). Or, they are embraced by a fierce disease. Or they are reborn with a karmic ailment as recompense.” (7A).

Another terrifying realm is the one outside the Northwest gate. There, the wicked are tethered to “sword trees,” or must walk on a “knife mountain”:

Their bodies were shaved and cut. They were tethered on top of sword trees. The wind blew through them from “all directions” (bada 八達), and the wind blew the trees down. When below, their feet tread on a “knife mountain” (daoshan 刀山), and their comings and goings were innumerable. Their hands and feet were injured and rotting (7A), so that blood and pus flowed out. It is impossible to look at this unbearable pain. (7B).

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63 Badao is related to the “Eight Directions,” implying that the wind blew through them from every direction.
Again, like the area outside the Southeast gate, this area is for those who threatened Taoism.

According to the passage, these people were involved in Taoist practices, but were not sincere in their faith. Although they studied the Tao, they did not understand it, and, when teaching it, subsequently distorted it:

These sinners, in their former lives, were flighty and lustful. They longed for success and profit for their selves. They valued superior studies and were stingy with valuables. They did not accept the Scriptures and Laws. When they presented letters, they held up what their minds pursued. They were stingy, and grudgingly accepted the Scriptures, and never fully applied their will. They caused the Teachers to not comply with the age limits, and taught the disciples to not care about Heaven and Earth. They did not have covenants, but, moreover, together transmitted (the teachings), so that those who deliver (the teachings) were not respectful and those who received were not refined. They openly chanted to expose secret texts, spreading them out, displaying these in the midst of the vulgar. This brought the stupid and vulgar to slander the Tao and the Perfected. They slandered the Precious Scriptures. Or, in accepting the Scriptures, they were profane and careless. They held the Three Jewels in contempt, and do not uphold the Teacher's instructions, then use their own meanings. Or, with the precepts for the Fasts, they were not energetic and their thoughts could not focus (8A).

Further, for their blasphemy, laziness, and contempt, for 10,000 kalpas, they “are reborn into the midst of the inferior and stupid, and for them the Tao is far away. Or, they encounter the six afflictions, and are deaf, blind, and not smart” (8A).

The above examples illustrate fundamental changes in the Taoist portrayal of the underworld. In adopting Buddhist themes, the Taoist underworld became a place of terror, whereas before it is portrayed as a dismal place. Here, it is obvious that the underworld, in
addition to its previous function as a "storehouse of the dead," possesses broader implications. Specifically, the harsh and exaggerated nature of the punishment serves to motivate the living to a better more moral life. This is, hence, more of a "hellfire and brimstone text." Further, the crimes illustrated above reflect primarily Taoist concerns. In particular, competition with practices of the popular matrix remain central here, and, hence, these terrifying punishments are meant to steer the religious away from popular practices and towards orthodox Taoist ones. Lastly, it is important to consider that since Taoism adopted these terrifying images about the underworld, the sense of anxiety to release these suffering spirits from these realms most likely became more urgent. In response to this sense of urgency, new measures are required, and these methods of release are discussed in the next subsection.

b.) The "Fast of the Yellow Register":

The Fast of the Yellow Register is an open-air event, performed in the courtyard of a Taoist temple and presided over by Taoist priests. It is open event, in that it is open to all members of the community. The ritual itself specifically focuses on releasing the wicked from the underworld. Unlike other examples, it does not dwell on misfortune caused by the ghostly affliction and the removal of these afflictions by exorcism.

In general, the ritual is a reflection of two trends that merged together during the period between the later Han and Six Dynasties Periods. The first trend is the overwhelming presence of the bureaucratic motif, and, the second, "collective responsibility." These aspects are borne out in the system of appeals and petitions to attain the release of the dead, and the presence of numerous typically Chinese infernal regions, such as the Jiuyue, the "Nine Darknesses," and the Wuyue, the "Five Peaks," among others. Further, "collective responsibility" is again at work
here, as the participants attempt to attain the release of nine generations of their ancestors, and even benefits for themselves and parents. These are secured by ritual bargaining with the officials of the underworld. The second involves the appearance of “newer” concepts supplied by Buddhism, revealed by an abundance of Buddhist terminology present in the ritual, and by the presence of “transfer of merit” to attain release of the wicked dead. This latter aspect is particularly reminiscent of Buddhist practices.

Instructions for this ritual are found in the *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要, the “Unsurpassed Mysterious Essentials” (HY 1130.54). Composed during the Bei Zhou 北周, or Northern Zhou, Dynasty (557-581), during the reign of Bei Zhou Wudi 北周武帝 (r. 561-578), the *Wushang biyao* is a large collection of diverse topics related to Taoism of the Han and Six Dynasties period. In the 1926 edition of the Taoist Canon, for example, the *Wushang biyao* comprises 13 fascicles. The work is divided into 100 *juan* or chapters. Each chapter and subdivision addresses specific and wide ranging topics, such as the following: categories of days, months, and stars; the shape of the Cosmos, including the Sanjie 三界, the “Three Realms,” derived from Buddhism, the Jiudi 九地, the “Nine Earth (Regions),” Ling Shan 靈山, “Numinous Mountains”; categories of various beings, human, immortal, and divine; different methods of attaining immortality; offices in the Cosmos; talismans; moral codes; and rituals. The Fast of the Yellow Register is found in the Scroll 54 of this corpus.

The text begins with directions for establishing the ritual arena. It outlines how the temple precincts are transformed into sacred space, by marking out the “Ten Gates,” *shimen* 十門, that is the four cardinal directions, the four intermediary directions, and two gates for above and below placed in the Northwest and Southwest. These actions essentially create conduits for the entrance of the gods so they can enter the ritual area. The text states
The ranks of the Immortals said this about the Writings of the Lower Primordial Fast of the Yellow Register: "(If you desire) to rescue and save (those with) guilty karmic roots, with majesty and dignity, then in the centre of the courtyard, set up an altar, by opening the four cardinal directions, the four intermediary directions, and above and below. Together these directions make up the Ten Gates. In the centre (of each gate), suspend a "Signboard" (guangling 廣令), 2 zhang, 4 chi long\(^{64}\) to each of the four corners. Marked with red cloth, this identifies the position of the gates. Above and below are set in order" (8B).

Outside of this precinct, the officials then establish four gates for Heaven, Earth, Sun, and Moon. These are called the "Gates of the Cities of the Four Worlds," shijiedou men 世界都門:

Once the Ten Gates are finished, then, at this time, outside of the Ten Gates open the Celestial Gates, the Terrestrial Portals, the Gate of the Sun, and the Gate of the Moon. (These are at) the Four Intermediary Directions. (At these places) suspend a signboard, 3 zhang 2 chi tall.\(^{65}\) These are called the "Gates of the Cities of the Four Worlds." This pacifies the areas of the Eight Trigrams,\(^{66}\) indicating that above and below are set in order. In the centre, the "Ritual Master" (Fashi 法師) (8B) practices the Tao (1A).

Then, the text continues to establish other areas of the precinct, again denoted by signboards.

Further, lamps are set up beside each gate. These are lit at night, and work in conjunction with the incense: the smoke of the incense is used to ascend to Heaven to attract the various deities, while the lamps, illuminate the area to attract the attention of the deities and show them the way

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\(^{64}\) Maspero suggests that these areas are identified by stakes, nine Chinese feet high joined by a banner at the top, identifying each gate. Translation of guangling as a "signboard" based on Maspero (1981:293). Further, one zhang 丈 is approximately 245 cm, while a chi is 24.5 cm. Two zhang 4 chi equal 588 cm.

\(^{65}\) Or 784 cm tall.

\(^{66}\) These refer to the original Trigrams attributed to Fuxi, which are attached to the Yi Jing, the "Book of Changes." Here, they correspond to the Eight Directions or areas of the Cosmos.
Once established, the ritual then proceeds to the “Invocation of the Incense,” *zhuxiang* 祝香, to summon the representatives of gods. All of these officials, specifically, messengers, or scribes, relay their “talismans,” or *fu* 符, of the living to the divine, and these messengers travel along the “Postal Relay Stations.” This process begins with the Taoist priests “gnashing their teeth,” a typical Taoist element of ritual performance:

The Masters in the centre gnash their teeth twenty-four times and say this incantation: “(May the) Officials and Messengers of the Incense Office, the Dragon and Tiger Lords of the Left and Right, submit the incense to the “Postal Relay Stations” (yi 驛; Hucker:2926). The Dragon Rider Scribes and Attendants of the Incense and Golden Lads transmit these words. The Jade Maidens and the Five Thearchs ⁶⁸ arrange the “talismans” for each of the thirty-six (divine) people who will rise up out of the hamlets and frontier regions of the Earth. The Officers of the Perfected quickly rise up. Formally dressed, I, so-and-so, have set everything in a proper manner. We burn incense, carry out the Tao, and desire to obtain the correct and true *qi* of the Ten Directions from the Most High (4B).

When the ritual continues, the *qi* of the Most High of the Ten Directions, that is the *qi* of the various Taoist deities, enters the ritual precinct, and then the bodies of the participants. Following this, the central deities, the “Most High Limitless Great Tao,” Taishang Wuji Dadao 太上無極大道, the “Utterly Perfected,” Zhi Zhen 至真, the “Jade Emperor,” Yudi 玉帝, and the “Lord-on-High,” Shangdi 上帝, enter the precinct followed by an entourage of

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⁶⁷ *Fu* refers to magic “charms” or “talismans,” originally implying “contracts” or “testimonial documents” between two parties. Also, they imply pledges of a feudal bond between a lord and subject, and “tickets of safe passage presented at each stage of a journey” (Robinet 1993:24-25). From the context, it appears that they are orders given to thirty-six kinds of deities.

⁶⁸ This means the Five Rulers of the legendary period, Tai Hao, Yan Di, the Yellow Thearch or Emperor, Shao Hao, and Zhuan Xu.
immortals (5A). Summoned from all corners of the Cosmos, from the various stars and constellations of Heaven to the infernal regions, specifically the “Three Rivers and the Four Seas,” and the “Five Peaks,” the participants appeal to these deities and immortals, asking them to relay the $fu$ to the appropriate gods:

From above, we invite the Cavalry (lit. “Troops and Horses”) of the Heavenly Immortals, the Cavalry of the Terrestrial Immortals, the Cavalry of the Flying Immortals, the Cavalry of Perfected Men, the Cavalry of the Divine Men, the Cavalry of the Sun and Moon, the Cavalry of the Constellations and Stars, the Cavalry of the Nine Palaces, the Cavalry of the Five Thearchs, the Cavalry of the Three Rivers and the Four Seas, the Cavalry of the Five Peaks and Four Rivers—altogether 900,000,000 myriads of riders! (We invite) those who oversee the Fast and arrange it, thirty-two of each of them! (We invite) the Golden Lads, who attend to the incense, the Jade Maidens, who scatter flowers, the Five Thearchs, who arrange the $fu$, thirty-two of each of them! May those who deliver messages and report to the throne, and the Mounted Officials and Flying Dragons, etc., come down, and preside, overseeing the precincts of the Fast! For the benefit of such and such, and “Person of the Same Teaching” ($tongfa$ 同法), “his family, nine (generations of) ancestors, and his father and mother” ($moujia jia jiu zu fumu$ 某甲家九祖父母) rescue and save the dead $hun$ spirits, to enable them to leave the Long Night. So-and-so in today's fast, with a faithful and devout mind, pledges his life (5A).

Instructions to the faithful follow, in which the participants are to circle the precincts, three times in a clockwise direction. Then the official of the ritual recites the following pledge on behalf of his clients to release the spirits of the dead from their karmic burdens, and from their responsibilities in the underworld so they can ascend to the Heavens:

First, we raise the incense for the benefit of so-and-so, person of the same teaching, and his family, so we may rescue and save nine generations of
ancestors and his parents from the Bureau of the Nine Darknesses, the Jade Coffer, and the Long Night. The evil (suffering) of these dead hun spirits is in accord with the guilty roots of their previous lives. As this merit opens up salvation, we establish the Fast and burn incense. We invite and thank all those in the Ten Directions, and hope that our nine generations of ancestors and parents can be pulled out (4B) of “Suffering in the Dark” (youku 幽苦; lit. “Dark Suffering”), and ascend to Heaven. Today, we purposely burn incense, pledge our selves, pledge our spirits, and pledge our lives to the Great Tao. So-and-so, throws his body to the ground and pledges his life” (5A).

To obtain the release, the participants transfer their “merit,” gongde 功德, to the nine generations and pledge their lives. This then flows to the nine generations of ancestors in the different realms of the underworld, so that they may escape suffering:

To the Most High Three Worthies, (we) desiring thereby to pledge this merit so it flows to the of nine generations of ancestors and parents, begging that they attain escape from the “Ten Sufferings and Eight Difficulties” (Shiku Banan 十苦八難),69 and that the persons in the Long Night may see the brilliance of light, and ascend to Heaven, where clothing and food spontaneously appear, so that they may constantly dwell in wuwei (無為 or “without effort”). Today, we purposely burn incense and pledge ourselves (6A).

Ritual bargaining and appeals continue in the next passage, followed by acts of penitence on the part of living. Here, the participants offer silk tapestry, and a gold statue of a dragon, to compensate for their ancestors' sins. Ritual bargaining is another prevalent theme in Taoist salvation rituals, a trait that might perhaps result from Taoist attempts to replace the offerings of

69 The text does not explain the meaning of these two terms. They are originally Buddhist terms. The “Ten Sufferings,” specifically in a Buddhist context, is related to one's condition in this life. For example, birth, old age, sickness, death, confusion, etc. For reference, see Ding Fubao (1974:1565). They are not necessarily attached to conditions in the underworld. The “Eight Difficulties” are likewise not attached to conditions in the underworld, as they originally referred to conditions which prohibited one from hearing the Buddha's dharma (Soothill and Hodous:41). In a Taoist context, it refers to the difficulties one encounters in attaining or hearing the Tao.
blood and meat of popular practices, with offerings of precious goods, metals or cloth. Maspero hinted that this bargaining might be inspired by practices in the real world, mirroring practices associated with purchasing slaves (Maspero 1981:294). Further, to show their sincerity, the living kowtow to the different directions and slap their cheeks. They do both actions ninety times. In addition to supplying examples of these acts of contrition, the text mentions the condition of the dead in the underworld. There, they are interrogated, beaten and flogged, so much so that their bodies are ruined. Also mentioned here are the “Prefecture of the Nine Darknesses of the Long Night,” the Nüqing in the “Chapters of the Jade Coffers of Nüqing of the Upper Palace for Lifting Up and Saving,” and ritual bargaining:

The Master and disciples, at the same time, face west, and bow nine times. The Master kneels and says these words: “As for nine generations of ancestors and parents of the family of so-and-so, person of the same teaching, on the day they were born in this world, the original evil and guilt of that which they committed are accumulated in the Bureaus of the Nine Darknesses and the Long Night. There, the hun spirits are thoroughly interrogated and flogged, encountering all sorts of pains. Their bodies and bones are ruined and destroyed, and their toil and hardships difficult to bear. For a long time, they are submerged for 10,000 kalpas, and even at the end of this, Heaven will not release them. Today, in compliance with the true “Chapters of the Jade Coffers of Nüqing of the Upper Palace for Lifting Up and Saving,” in this Fast, we offer a blue embroidered silk tapestry of 90 chi or of 9 chi length, and one gold dragon, and we pledge our lives. May the Eastern Limitless Most High Numinous Jewel Heavenly Worthy of the Nine Qi, and the Heavenly Lords of the Eastern Villages (7B), and all the Numinous Offices, save and redeem the family of so-and-so, nine generations of ancestors, and parents. Their evil (condition) is in accord with their karmic roots. May all those of the Three Realms who together calculate one's [deeds] in the “Upper Places of Nüqing,” eliminate their records of guilt. May you open salvation for the destitute hun spirits, so their bodies may enter the brilliance of light and ascend to
Heaven, where clothing and food spontaneously appear. May they quickly attain
rebirth at the gates of blessings and good fortune. When so-and-so has attained the
perfection of the Tao, and united with the Perfected and Holy, may he be released
from bondage. We kowtow and slap our cheeks, each ninety times (8A).

Above we see the typically Chinese notion of “record” or “file-keeping,” specifically in the
“Upper Palaces of Nüqing” which apparently is responsible for the recording guilt. It should be
noted that Nüqing is a common motif in Taoist texts concerning the spirits of the dead, but its
ture significance is hard to decipher. Nickerson, for example, proposes that Nüqing might be
read as Nüqing 女情, or “feminine essence,” which might refer to a malodorous medicinal plant
and demonifiuge. Also, Nüqing refers to a revealer of “Demon Statutes,” specifically found in
the Nüqing kuilü 女青簡律 (HY 789: ca. 400 CE). In this context, it is linked to a variety of
celestial deities. Elsewhere, it refers to the Three Primes, or Three Primordials, which are linked
to the Sanguan. By the fifth and sixth centuries, Nüqing became a proper name for an Earth-
Prison of a later version of the prisons of Fengdu (Nickerson 1997:272-73, n. 8).

The ritual continues with petitions to each of the gods of the Five Peaks. For the
invocation and appeals to Taishan the text states:

Then, the Master and disciples, at the same time, walk to the left, and face the
East Peak, bow twice and say these words: “(For the benefit) of so-and-so, person
of the same teaching, nine generations of ancestors, and his parents so that they
may live again. As their original evils that were practised were shameful and
abominable offenses, in the Eastern Peak, Taishan, the Deities and Immortals of
the Numinous Offices, their guilt is accumulated for (suffering) in the Nine
Darknesses. There, they are banished and languish in servitude. In the darkness of
the Eastern Peak, they are detained in the midst of the Earth Prison(s) of Taishan.
The hun spirits are thoroughly interrogated and flogged, and suffer from all forms
of pain. For a long time, they are submerged for 10,000 kalpas, and even at the
end of this, Heaven will not release them. Today, we purposely burn incense and pledge our lives. All the Numinous Offices, all the Deities and Immortals of the Eastern Peak, Taishan, we beg that you excuse and give amnesty for those karmic burdens that were committed. We look up for release at the Eastern Peak from the guilt of their original evil. Release the “prisoners” (qiutu 囚徒), so their bodies may enter the brilliance of light and ascend to Heaven, where clothing and food spontaneously appear. (May) so-and-so attain the Tao and completely unite with the Green Thearch. We kowtow and slap our cheeks, each twenty times” (16A).

Following this, the Priests and participants appeal to the four other mountains. Then, then the address the Shuiguan, the Water Bureau and a host of deities attached to similar water realms belonging to the infernal regions. The following is an example of the appeal to the Water Realms:

Next, the Master and the disciples, at the same time, travel to the left. Facing North, bow twelve times, and thank the Water Bureau. Kneeling long, he says this: (May) so-and-so, person of the same teaching, his family, nine generations of ancestors, and parents be reborn. Their original evils that were committed are shameful and abominable offenses. The Water Thearchs of the Three Rivers and Four Seas, and Nine Rivers, and the Water Earls, River Marquises, and Water Scribes of the Offices of the Headwaters of the Twelve Rivers, all those of the Numinous Offices of the Shuiguan, accumulate (one’s) sins, accounted for in one's karma. In the Nine Darknesses, (the hun spirits) are banished, to languish in servitude. They completely block the Long Springs and the darkness holds them in the Frozen Night. In their suffering, the hun and po spirits are in complete pain, and utterly covered in burning embers (17B). For a long time, they are immersed for 10,000 kalpas, and even at the end of this, Heaven will not release them. Today, we purposely burn incense and pledge our lives (18A).

It is interesting to note that the Taoist priest is able to obtain the release of these spirits
when Heaven will not release them, illustrating fundamental differences between Buddhist and Taoist practitioners. Buddhist monks, for example, do not directly intercede on behalf of their patrons: they only facilitate the transfer of karmic merit. The Taoist priest, on the other hand, directly intercedes, and represents the family of the dead in the cosmos by issuing petitions and following proper procedure as an official. Near the end of the ritual, for example, the officiating priest takes a cord, on which is made a series of knots. He then unties a knot, symbolizing that the bonds of sin and the bonds which tie the dead to the underworld are severed (Maspero 1981:296). Once this is completed, the ritual is then finished and the spirits are released.

In all, the Fast is an exhausting affair. The participants, for example, uttered prayers at each of the gates while prostrating numerous times: 120 times to the intermediary directions, 30 times to the South, 70 to the West, 50 to the North, 30 to the Sun, 70 to the Moon, 365 to the Constellations, 20 to each of the Five Peaks, 120 to the Water Realms, and 360 to the Tao, the Sacred Books, and the Taoist Community (Maspero 1981:297). Indeed, this is a long and drawn-out affair. To do the ritual justice, it is appropriate to quote Maspero's summary of the emotional intensity of the Fast, for he seems to capture the flavour of the event:

Imagine the condition of those who have taken an active part in such a ceremony, who have recited a hundred long prayers and made more than two thousand prostrations! After the ordinary manner of Taoist festivals, the movements seem slow and solemn at first, are performed more and more quickly as the ceremony goes on; more than a day is spent in circling about and prostrating oneself several times a minute. The kneeling men throw themselves down, forehead to earth, come up, and begin again without having a moment's rest. Backs broken with incessant prostrations, they are covered with sweat and dust; half suffocated by incense fumes; deafened by gongs, drums and music; mouths dry from reciting prayers; spirits drained by noise, movement, hunger and thirst... (Maspero 1981:297).
Now comes the task of putting this ritual into a larger context. Indeed, the Fast itself involves numerous elements drawn from China's indigenous religious matrix. It is evident that release from the underworld here still addresses the "collective" concerns, in that it is ideally obtained for the benefit of nine generations of family, a tendency that would not seem out of place in pre-Buddhist practices. Another prominent example of previous motifs is the subterranean realms themselves. All of them originate from China's past, and, in name, they are not at all inspired by Buddhist models. Moreover, the entire Cosmological matrix is again aligned according to "correlative cosmology." In addition to the "Ten Gates," the "Nine Darknesses," and other nine related cognates, the entire Lingbao Cosmos is structured according to the *Wuxing*, the "Five Agents." Bokenkamp, for example, writes that the Five Peaks themselves correspond to the Five Agents: Taishan with East and Wood; Huoshan with South and Fire; Songshan with Centre and Earth; Huashan with East and Metal; and Hengshan with North and Water (Bokenkamp 1983:451-52). Another dominant theme is the overwhelming presence of the bureaucratic motif, evident in the summoning and petitioning of the different gods and officials. Also, "ritual bargaining" is reminiscent of practices attached to the ancestral cult. But, it differs here in that the goods are offered to Taoist deities in exchange for the freedom of the *hun* spirits.

In contrast, there are numerous elements that can be traced to Buddhist origins. The idea of "transfer of merit" is most likely derived from the Buddhist *Guijie*, the "Ghost Festival," inspired by the Buddhist *Yulanpen* festival, both discussed earlier. The only real apparent difference here is that in Buddhism the offerings are given first to the Buddhist community, which then transfers these offerings into karma given to the those in the underworld. In the Taoist case, the opposite is true, as they are first given to the gods. It is assumed though, that the
Taoist Priests kept these offerings.

Lastly, the Fast represents a substantial departure from previous practices attached to the underworld. As mentioned earlier, the underworld of the *Taiping jing* and the Shangqing tradition did not emphasise post-mortem punishment to the extent present in the Lingbao texts. In the *Taiping jing*, all spirits are summoned to the underworld, regardless of their moral standing, but all are not punished there. In the Shangqing, only those tried and found guilty by the Water Bureau are punished. In contrast, the Lingbao underworld is a place of punishment: Lingbao texts do not mention unpunished spirits in the infernal regions, and it is assumed that the virtuous already ascended to Heaven, or those in the underworld would eventually be released because of “suffrages.” Hence, death in the Lingbao context is a “moral death,” and in function it closely resembles the Western “Purgatory.”
Chapter Five: Conclusion

In sum, the overall Taoist view of the underworld changed from one that functioned primarily as a "storehouse of the dead," a realm responsible for segregating the dead from the living, to a realm also concerned with post-mortem punishment. But, even after the appearance of the latter trend, both of these paradigms functioned simultaneously within the Chinese religious matrix.

For the most part, these realms do not entirely correspond to the Judeo-Christian infernal regions, making comparisons between the two difficult. Specifically, the earliest manifestations of the Chinese underworld resemble Greek Hades and the Jewish Sheol on a superficial level, as these realms served to separate the living from the dead. But the overwhelming function of the Chinese underworld as an administration responsible for controlling spirits and doling out punishment in the realm of the living makes the Chinese versions substantially different. Even the Christian Hell bears little resemblance to the Chinese underworld, as the second coming and eternal punishment are not relevant to the Chinese worldview at all. Only the Christian Purgatory bears some similarities with its Taoist counterparts. Purgatory, a place for refinement and potential release from post-mortem suffering facilitated by "suffrages," ritual offerings and prayers by the living, is similar to the Lingbao view, in that release from suffering is the ultimate goal. But the Chinese inclusion of the Buddhist concepts of karma and rebirth make this view substantially different from the Christian models. For the most part, the use of Western terminology to describe the Taoist underworld is not entirely accurate and is often misleading in characterizing the Chinese or Taoist subterranean realms. Instead of reliance of Western concepts, Bernstein's typology of types of death, meaning "neutral death," a condition in which the dead are not punished and only segregated from the living, and a "moral death," where the
dead are judged, and, if wicked, punished for their previous transgressions, is perhaps the most
effective way of evaluating the Chinese, specifically Taoist, underworld.

Examination of the four “case-studies” of the Taoist underworld according to this
typology reveal that the earliest manifestations of the Taoist underworld did not punish the
“wicked” dead and is hence “neutral” in tone. The roots of these tendencies exist in the Chinese
ancestral cult and practices linked to exorcisms, beliefs and practices both prominent and
persistent in the Chinese worldview. Within the context of the ancestral cult, the spirits of the
ancestors are ideally controlled and their charisma harnessed for the benefit of the family. If these
spirits acted on their own volition, that is if they acted without sanction from the family or the
deities and officials that lorded over the spirits of the dead, misfortune could result. To control
and segregate the dead, the Chinese underworld by the Late Warring States and Han periods
mirrored the role of the government in the real world. By the Han, in particular, the offices and
bureaus of the cosmos lorded over the dead and administering the relationships between the dead
and the living. Eliminating unwanted and noxious influences by ghostly or demonic afflictions
required the living to submit petitions to the officials of the infernal regions, a tendency evident
in the “Recipes for Fifty-two Ailments” and the “grave-quelling” texts of the Han. After the Han,
these beliefs and practices came to typify the Chinese view of the relationship between the
human and the divine. As indicated by the “Great Petition for Tomb Cases,” a Celestial Master’s
text of the sixth century indicates that these same concerns are prevalent in Chinese religious
practices even centuries after Buddhist elaborations of the underworld.

The earliest manifestations of the Taoist underworld incorporate these same ideas. The
underworld of the Taiping jing, for example, expresses these traits in that the underworld gathers
the spirits of the dead, segregates them from the living, interrogates them, and even punishes the
living through the use of ghostly affliction and a reduced lifespan as they are ultimately held accountable for their relative’s actions according to collective guilt. If need be, that is if the dead is one of the "wicked dead," or if this spirit unlawfully afflicted the living, then this individual spirit is punished by beatings or by hard labour in the afterlife. These are typically Chinese views of punishment in the real world. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the "grave-quelling" texts of the Han only hint at punishment of the dead in the underworld. But, in the context of the Taiping Jing, the references to post-mortem punishment are more clearly stated. But at the same time, they appear simple and straightforward on comparison to Buddhist portrayals of post-mortem punishment.

These same traits are also evident in the Shangqing texts. Specifically, the Zhengao illustrates that the Shangqing underworld adheres to the same idea of segregating the dead from the living and controlling them through a subterranean government, such as the Six Palaces of Fengdu. Post-mortem punishment, however, is not important in this context: the Zhengao texts only mention a few cases of punishing the wicked dead. The most prominent of these is, of course, the case of Hua Qiao, who, for transmitting spurious texts, is interrogated and later beaten in the Shuiguan or "Water Bureau." We must consider that he is not guilty of breaking a moral code and offending society at large. Instead, he is, most likely, only guilty of challenging the religious authority of the patrons of the Shangqing tradition by circulating his own texts. Hence, he is more of "rebel" than a "wicked soul," and he does not represent the condition of the collective dead in general. The other example concerning the Water Bureau mentions plaints issued by the dead against the living for transgressions experienced during life. In essence, these plaints and the legal procedure mirror ghostly or demonic affliction and the methods to stop this affliction revealed in Han "grave-quelling" texts. Again, as in the Han, punishments are parcelled
out in the realm of the living, and disputes between the living and the dead are solved by a subterranean government, here, the Water Bureau. It is obvious that again, the underworld is central in the complex relationship between the living and the dead.

The early Lingbao tradition of the fourth century interpreted the Taoist underworld in a different light. This is due to the Lingbao tradition’s conscious attempts of borrowing Buddhist ideas to attract more converts. As a result, on the surface, the imagery and vocabulary resembles Buddhist ideas. The presence of karma and rebirth, horrific tortures in the afterlife to goad the living to a more moral life, and the presence of special realms for punishing spirits guilty of specific transgressions illustrate that the underworld of Taoism had changed substantially, in many ways resembling Buddhist infernal regions, and adhering to a more “moral death.” Further, salvation in this context took on broader implications. Previous to the arrival of Buddhism in China, attaining release from the underworld belonged, for the most part, to the elite of China only, as evident in the cult of immortality, practices too expensive, elaborate and time-consuming for the common people. By the first few centuries of the Common Era, Taoism emerged as a well-rounded tradition, possessing broad-based appeal and rituals to address large-scale public concerns. This aspect, combined with the growing influence of Buddhist ideas, such as karma and rebirth, enriched the religious vocabulary of the time, and the results of this can be seen in such rituals as the Fast of the Yellow Register. In this context, release from the underworld became much more accessible to the common people.

Although on the surface Taoism adopted numerous motifs from Buddhism, several key and defining traits still dominated Taoist perceptions and practice, thereby setting it apart from other religious traditions. First, the very structure of the Taoist underworld itself remained the relatively consistent despite the presence of Buddhist ideas. It is obvious in the four case-studies
of the Taoist world that the cosmos remained structured according to models established before the arrival of Buddhism, meaning the Eight Gates, the Ten Gates, the Nine Darknesses and other realms linked to correlative cosmology, and the presence of individual subterranean realms such as the offices and realms of the Springs, Mountains, Rivers, etc., all of which belong to China’s indigenous beliefs. Further, the operation of the cosmos still, for the most part, functions according to *ganying* or “resonance,” in that harmony with the various parts of the cosmos determines the extent of prosperity and suffering. In turn, the outward expression of *ganying*, that is communication with the offices of the cosmos, lent itself to the perception of the cosmos as a bureaucracy and how to communicate with it, a trait entirely different from parallel Buddhist ideas. Namely, Buddhists monks did not attempt to petition officials to obtain release for spirits languishing in the netherworld. Rather, they operate according to the dictates of dharma, and transfer merit for the benefit of the dead. Taoists, on the other hand, function as officials proper, in that they would appeal to the various offices of the underworld and directly interceded on behalf of the living, both to obtain release from the underworld and relief from ghostly or demonic afflictions. In short, they possess legal authority invested to them by the various deities associated with Heaven and Earth. By virtue of their position, they are able to free spirits from the Nine Darknesses, something Heaven apparently would not do. In short, they are legal functionaries operating according to the dictates of Bureaucratic procedure, a trait not shared by the Buddhist practice and one that sets them apart from other traditions.

All throughout its various manifestations, the Chinese underworld is always linked to human suffering, and perceptions of human suffering shaped the role of the infernal regions. In particular, in pre-Buddhist China, the Chinese viewed human suffering as a result of improper ritual performance within the context of the ancestral cult, and later immorality, and this
suffering was carried out primarily in the human realm, implemented by the ghosts and spirits. Further, all guilt and suffering is determined according to “collective morality.” In a process similar to those in the Chinese government and legal system, the underworld, after the dead had been gathered and interrogated, could also punish the living because of the descendant’s immortality and their connection with the dead. In short, the offices held all within the family lineage responsible, a trait that exists in early Taoism. In the *Huainanzi*, for example, human suffering resulted from the actions of the government and its failure to adhere to the patterns and expectations established by Heaven. In the *Taipingjing*, this tendency is manifest in the concept of *chengfu*, or “inherited guilt.” Here, the suffering of the age of warfare and chaos between the end of the Han and the Sui periods resulted from the collective guilt of the living and the dead, compounded with the guilt of ancestors several or dozens of generations in the past. If any suffering stemmed from individual action, it was carried out by affliction from the ghosts and spirits attached to the underworld, manifest in sickness and a shortened lifespan. These same themes continue in the Shangqing tradition, as evident in the court cases judged in the Water Bureau. Again, it is apparent that the underworld was directly involved in parcelling out human suffering in the realm of the living. The Shangqing differs in that the Shangqing primarily focussed on the salvation of the three clans, the Yang, Ge and Xu. Only these clans, and a few others attached to these lineages obtained salvation, and any punishments listed in the Shangqing texts resulted from offenses against these clans. The condition of the collective dead is not listed and we can only guess their condition.

The Lingbao view, however, differs from the former models. Due mostly to the presence of the Buddhist view of “moral death,” the Taoist underworld became transformed from what had been previously a dismal and unpleasant condition, to one that was thoroughly terrifying. As
evident in the Lingbao models of the cosmos, human suffering was viewed in a different light, in
that the Lingbao tradition portrayed human suffering as more of a result of individual than
collective guilt, and decided according to one's karma and implemented not only by ghosts and
spirits, but also by rebirth and post-mortem punishment. Despite the presence of these traits,
release from this realm remained the responsibility of the living descendants through the medium
of “transfer of karmic merit” and ritual sacrifice reminiscent to the ancestral cult. Hence,
“collective responsibility” remained in operation here. Further, the Lingbao underworld is also
different in that the presence of a moral code linked to reciprocal and often gruesome and
exaggerated punishments in the underworld and in subsequent rebirths. These traits further attest
to the thoroughly “moral” view of death in part inspired by Buddhism, hinting at yet another
function of the underworld, a punitive function discouraging people from immorality under the
threat of punishment, that is a “moral death,” a trait that did not exist in such a gruesome manner
before the introduction of Buddhism to China.

From a broader perspective, the afterlife, the Heavens and the underworlds of any
religious tradition are part of a process to make sense of the world, particularly to explain human
suffering, retribution, death, among other things. All religious traditions are faced with this
problem, but the solutions they find are always creative and couched in their own language.
Taoism, for example, when exposed to Buddhist models of the cosmos, did not adopt these ideas
mindlessly. Long before the arrival of Buddhism, the religious matrix of China did not require a
postmortem retributive realm because its world view already possessed a functional explanation
of human suffering and retribution. With the arrival of Buddhism and, hence, “moral death,”
Taoism absorbed these newer ideas and made them its own, imbuing these ideas with their own
character. Numerous religious systems possess purgatorial realms, such as the Christian, Hindu,
Buddhist, etc., but how these individual traditions viewed the relationship between the living and the dead, their respective responsibilities, and how they performed the appropriate rituals sets them apart. As discussed in this thesis, the real difference between Buddhist and Taoist views of the underworld stems from cultural differences. One of the defining characteristics of Taoist rituals is its emphasis on procedure, particularly bureaucratic procedure, resulting from perhaps the most dominant institution in China, the government. In this case, perceptions of how the government functioned shaped how ritual is structured, how the officiants carry it out, how the cosmos is structured, even the condition of the dead in the underworld, and the nature of the relationship between the living and the dead.
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