THE DEMON STORIES OF HONG MAI'S YIJIANZHI

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a selection of demon stories in the Yijianzhi (Records of Yijian), a compilation of stories and anecdotes recorded by the Song historian Hong Mai (1123-1202). This collection has been largely neglected by scholars until very recently. Falling under the category of zhiguai (records of anomalies), the stories in the Yijianzhi primarily concern supernatural events, gathered by Hong Mai from family, friends and acquaintances. Similar to belief legends, the stories contain repetitive themes and plot-structure carried over from earlier zhiguai. Demon stories make up a considerable portion of the supernatural stories within the collection and are identifiable by their adherence to a common plot-type, in which a protagonist relies on magic and the aid of a religious specialist to destroy a malevolent demon. The stories are significant for the information they contain on Buddhist, Daoist, and popular ritual during the Song. Through a close reading and translation of ten stories, we gain a vivid picture of how people of the Song conceptualized the world of the demonic and how their perspectives were shaped by religious beliefs that informed their daily lives.
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Introduction

In 1196 the Song historian Hong Mai 洪邈 (1123-1202) wrote these remarks in his preface to the tenth installment of the *Yijianzhi 雅堅志* (Records of Yijian):

> Usually each time I hear a guest’s tale, I write it down. If we are drinking and I do not have time, then the next morning I try to remember it and record it. Then I quickly show it to the person who told me the tale, in order to make sure that there are no differences in detail in the entire tale—and only then do I stop. Thus, I do not lose what is told to me, and it is reliable and can be recounted.  

Over a span of sixty years, Hong Mai gathered tales for the *Yijianzhi*, the largest collection of stories in the Song after the *Taiping guangji 太平廣記* (Wide gleanings from the Taiping era). He faithfully recorded what he had witnessed himself or heard from his informants, writing that the *Yijianzhi* “contains things I have seen and heard with my eyes and ears.” The stories in the *Yijianzhi* document a reality seen by people during the Southern Song dynasty, a reality filled with ghosts, demons and strange phenomena.

Many of the stories included in the *Yijianzhi* fall into the genre of *zhiguai 志怪*, supposed

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1 Hong Mai, *Yijianzhi 雅堅志* zhigeng 支庚 preface. I am using Valerie Hansen’s translation. See Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods of Medieval China, 1127-1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 20. For sake of clarity, all examples drawn from the *Yijianzhi* will be cited first by book, then followed by chapter (juan 卷), then the number of the story in the chapter.

2 Li Fang 李昉 (925-996 A.D.), *Taiping guangji 太平廣記*, (Beijing: Dazhong wenyi chubanshe, 1998). All references to stories in the *Taiping guangji* will be referred to by their respective chapter number.

3 *Yijianzhi, yizhi 雅志* preface.
true accounts of the unexplainable and supernatural. Similar to folk legends, zhiguai straddle the border between truth and fiction. Many zhiguai stories show an adherence to particular plot types and contain repetitive themes and imagery. All show an overwhelming interest in uncanny events or behaviour which defy rational explanation. Supernatural stories make up a significant portion of the material included in the Yijianzhi and the study of these tales provides valuable insight into the ways in which Song people attempted to understand the strange.

Until recently, there have been few scholarly studies devoted to the Yijianzhi. This has been true of many zhiguai collections, which were often neglected in the past due to their fantastic content. Fortunately, the zhiguai genre has come under increasing attention and scholars have utilized a variety of methods to understand its importance. Some scholars have focused their interests on its position in the Chinese literary tradition while others have approached zhiguai texts from the viewpoint of religious and social historians.

Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) in A Brief History of Chinese Fiction (Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue 中國小說史略), was the first literary historian to claim that the zhiguai genre represented one of the earliest stages in the development of Chinese fiction. Until recently, this statement has rarely been challenged. Scholars such as Kenneth DeWoskin and Karl Kao are among those who have adopted Lu Xun’s view. They see zhiguai as a type of “proto-fiction” that developed during the Six Dynasties out of the Chinese historiographical tradition and laid the groundwork for later, more sophisticated, forms of prose-writing. Because of the move away from traditional history writing, DeWoskin argues, writers were “free to indulge in the conscious fictionalizing that is the distinct feature of late Six Dynasties chih-kuai and the T’ang ch’uan-ch’i.”

3 DeWoskin, “The Six Dynasties Chih-kuai,” 49.
Recently, research has questioned the idea that zhiguai accounts are mere literary constructions. Jennifer Fyler, in her study of demons in Six Dynasty zhiguai, claims that the stories highlight the paranoid attitudes towards women in the Confucian system. Chen Yizhong has stated that if one scratches away the supernatural aspects of the stories, realistic elements hide underneath. Patricia Ebrey and Valerie Hansen have looked at zhiguai collections such as the Yijianzhi for evidence on how people of the Song formulated their religious beliefs in a time of political and social transition. Robert Campany has argued that anomaly accounts were thought of in medieval China as verifiable historical records that explored the taxonomic boundaries between animals and humans and between humans and spirits. Through the exploration of these boundaries, authors of these accounts hoped to explain and understand their own place in the cosmos.

Glen Dudbridge, in his study of Dai Fu’s (8th century) Guangyiji 天問 (Great book of marvels), approaches zhiguai texts as examples of oral history that are capable of providing a window into the everyday life of medieval men and women. Similar to Hong Mai, Dai Fu had an obsessive interest in the supernatural and gathered his stories from people who came from various levels of Tang society. Dudbridge examines the validity of these stories as historical sources and argues that the Guangyiji “presents a set of perceptions as close to the man in the street as we are ever likely to find.” The value of such “records gained from word of mouth,” he asserts, “is bound up with their special character as subjective, spoken testimony.”

The oral nature of the Guangyiji, like the Yijianzhi, is one of its most defining characteristics.

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1 Chen Yizhong, ed. Song Yuan xiaoshuo shi 宋元小説史 (Jiangsu: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998), 160.
4 Dudbridge, Religious Experience, 63.
5 Dudbridge, Religious Experience, 138.
The voices that contributed to the making of the texts give access to a rich tradition of discourse about the strange as well as giving insight into medieval religious beliefs.

The oral background of zhiguai is the focus of two studies by Patrick Hanan and Leo Tak-hung Chan. Hanan, in *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition*, examines the oral nature of the classical story and its relationship to the folktale.\(^\text{12}\) He singles out certain groups of stories, such as the demon story, that had an influence on the later vernacular short story. Hanan does not acknowledge the truth-value of the stories but instead draws attention to an alternative tradition of oral storytelling to which zhiguai are indebted. He believes that the stories in many zhiguai collections, including the *Yijianzhi*, originated in a variety of contexts, including occasions of amateur storytelling, where listener and teller mutually interacted. The stories that resulted may have derived from this type of interactive discourse. While Hanan suggests that the term “folktale” may not suit the type of material Hong Mai gathered, he does contend that “what lies behind the *I-chien chih* is oral fiction.”\(^\text{13}\)

Chan, in his study of Ji Yun's 紀昀 (1724-1805) *Yuewei caotang biji* 閔微草堂筆記 (Random jottings at the cottage of Yue Wei), adopts Hanan's thesis in his examination of the zhiguai tradition in China.\(^\text{14}\) He, like Hanan, sees the stories as a type of conversational exchange, believing them to be products of amateur storytelling by the elite. Chan looks at the position of zhiguai in relation to other forms of Chinese short narrative, including biji 筆記

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\(^\text{13}\) Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story*, 186.

(miscellaneous notes) and chuanqi (tales of the marvelous), and notes the general neglect accorded to the genre due to its ties to superstitions and folk beliefs.15

The belief that the zhiguai story has its foundation in oral storytelling is difficult to substantiate, considering we do not know the contexts out of which many of these stories developed. In addition, the language of the zhiguai story, composed in classical Chinese, makes no effort to capture the orality of the tale. However, the relationship between zhiguai and folklore is an undeniable one. When examining the plot styles of groups of stories in the Yijianzhi, and in other collections of zhiguai, we find a remarkable similarity in structure and thematic elements. Within the often simplistic and repetitive structure of a zhiguai story lie complex and deep-rooted attitudes towards the spirit-world. Upon careful examination, the events and phenomena reported or described give evidence of a particular way of perceiving the world and provide a glimpse into the early belief systems of medieval Chinese men and women.

One of the few works to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Yijianzhi is the recent study by Edward L. Davis who relies on the stories in the collection to examine spirit-possession and exorcism during the Song.16 The Yijianzhi contains almost two-hundred accounts of spirit-possession, which range from sexual contact with female succubi to encounters with demons of trees and stones. Davis bases his analysis on a well-defined selection of stories and Buddhist and Daoist canonical sources as well, and gives a rich picture of culture and religion in Song society. The stories, according to Davis, are valuable documents of social history. He writes, “The close reading and the creative use of the literary anecdotes that make up Hong Mai’s Yijianzhi can bring us as close to historical fieldwork as we will ever get in using a text of pre-modern China.”17

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15 Chan, The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts, 3.
17 Davis, Society and the Supernatural, 17.
The demon stories that Davis examines make up an important category in the *Yijianzhi*. Through them we encounter a panoply of demonic beings and ritualistic practices that shaped the religious landscape of the Song. These stories contain, as Campany uses the term, "naturalistic" types of elements that, as he notes, "represent an older stratum in the history of relations between the living and the dead in China." They retain within them ancient beliefs and values concerning the demonic. In them, demons attack or bewitch living people without reason and their fundamental concern is the way in which man can exorcize the demon through the use of magic arts. This concern sets the demon story apart from the ghost story, which often stresses the moral obligations that exist between human and nonhuman. In a demon story, any type of moral relationship between demon and man is ambiguous and the focus of the story is not on giving the demon what it desires but on killing it, often with the aid of an exorcist. The expulsion of the demon through apotropaic means is one of the defining characteristics of the demon story and is revealing of the ways in which early Chinese mastered their fear of the unknown.

In this thesis, I analyze a selection of demon stories from the *Yijianzhi* that contain a common "exorcist plot" in which a protagonist must call on a religious specialist to get rid of a malevolent demon. This plot is not only present in the *Yijianzhi*, but appears in earlier collections of *zhiguai* as well, including the *Soushenji* 搜神記 (In search of the supernatural) and the *Guangyiji*. The selected stories are significant for the information they contain on the various rituals and exorcistic practices that were popular during the Song. Through their study, we gain a vivid picture of how people of the Song conceptualized the demon world and how their perspectives were shaped by the religious beliefs that informed their daily lives.

In choosing to work with a collection as large and unwieldy as the *Yijianzhi*, I was faced with the daunting task of selecting and organizing stories that I felt most properly represented a

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“demon story.” Because the stories in the Yijianzhi are not organized in any discernible systematic fashion, I began my research by examining the demon stories looked at by other scholars, most notably Hanan and Davis, in addition to reading through the collection myself. I took detailed notes on the stories I read, paying attention to common plot-types and variations of the demon stories I found. When choosing the stories, I identified those that I felt were most reflective of the exorcist plot-type and contained similarities in plot structure and themes. Overwhelmingly, the stories centered on a protagonist in a face-off with a malicious entity. Exorcism was one of the most notable characteristics of the stories I read. To impose order on such a vast collection, I singled out those stories that I felt contained elements not only seen in the Yijianzhi but were also obvious in other zhiguai collections as well. I eventually limited my study to only ten stories and drew on others as needed to support my points.

Chapter one of this thesis provides an overview of the Yijianzhi collection and its position in the zhiguai genre. Chapter two gives the criteria by which I define a “demon” and discusses some of the various forms of the demon that appear in the Yijianzhi and other zhiguai collections. In chapter three, I translate five demon stories from the Yijianzhi that contain a common exorcist plot-type and examine what they can tell us about Song attitudes towards the demonic. In chapter four I conclude my discussion by providing examples of demon stories from earlier collections. Five additional demon stories from the Yijianzhi are translated in full in the appendix.
Chapter One
The Yijianzhi Collection

1.1. Biography of Hong Mai

Hong Mai (1123-1202) was born in Boyang (modern Jiangxi), where his father Hong Hao 洪皓 (1088-1155) was stationed as a minor official. In 1129, when Hong Mai was just six, his father was sent to the occupied north to serve as ambassador to the Jin empire. Hong Mai did not see his father again until 1143. At the age of sixteen, Hong Mai’s mother died and he and his two elder brothers, Hong Gua 洪适 and Hong Zun 洪遵, were sent to live with their maternal uncle in Wuxi, Jiangsu, for the next four years. That same year, Hong Mai began preparing for the jinshi degree. After three years of preparation, he failed the exam, though his brothers passed. In 1145, he tried again and succeeded, thus beginning his official life. Hong Hao’s political views, however, and his resistance to the Jin, had created for his family numerous political enemies. Because of this, Hong Mai’s civil service career was often overshadowed by difficulties. During the duration of his political career, he was banished and sent into exile four times, depending on which faction was in control. He worked in various posts, serving in modern Fujian, Guangzhou, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang. Though he never achieved the ranks of his brothers, he did eventually attain the level of Hanlin academician. Hong Mai died in 1202, at the age of eighty years old. He was given the posthumous title of wenmin 文敏, “sagacious scholar.”

It was probably because of his difficulties in the political arena that Hong Mai was able to devote so much time to his writing. At the age of twenty, he began collecting anecdotes for the *Yijianzhi*, something that would occupy most of his life. He also compiled an anthology of Tang poetry, wrote the *Sichao guoshi* 四朝國史 (The official histories of four courts for the national office of historiography), as well as the biographies of the four emperors who reigned between 1068-1127. His best-known works, however, are a collection of essays, *Rongzhai suibi* 容齊隨筆 (Notes from Rongzhai) and the afore mentioned *Yijianzhi*.

1.2 The *Yijianzhi* Collection

Hong Mai began to collect stories for the *Yijianzhi* around 1142 and he completed his first installment in 1161. J. ter Haar suggests that Hong Hao, who had returned from the North in 1143, may have assisted him in selecting material for the first collection. Five of the stories in the first chapter are quoted from Hong Hao’s *Songmo jiwen* 松漠紀聞 (Record of things heard in Songmo). The first installment of the *Yijianzhi* was received with great enthusiasm. In 1166, Hong published his second installment, which was also successful. In the years that followed, he continued this pattern of publishing installments every few years. Ter Haar remarks that because of the sporadic publishing of installments in the *Yijianzhi*, it was difficult for Song readers to own a complete collection of the tales, as a result almost half the collection has been lost. The one person who may have seen all the installments was the Song scholar Zhao Yushi 趙與時, who quotes from Hong Mai’s prefaces in his own *Bintui lu* 賓退錄 (Records of the retiring guests).

Originally, there were five volumes of the *Yijianzhi*, divided into 420 chapters. Now only

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106 chapters survive, which contain a total of 2,692 stories. There has been an ongoing effort by scholars to recover the lost tales. In 1927, Zhang Yuanji 張元濟 published a twenty volume edition of the *Yijianzhi* that brought together all surviving installments and existing commentary. He also included an appendix (*bu* 補) of material from a Ming manuscript based on a Song edition. Furthermore, Zhang found additional material that he included in a separate appendix (*zaibu* 再補). In 1981, He Zhuo 何卓 published his own edition based on Zhang Yuanji’s 1927 edition. He included a third appendix (*sanbu* 三補) of lost anecdotes found in the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (Encyclopedia of the Yongle era). Since then, Wang Xiuhui 王秀惠 has shown that the recovered anecdotes in the two appendices by Zhang and He have been misidentified and do not come from the *Yijianzhi*. She includes in her article twenty-seven newly recovered anecdotes, found primarily in Song and Yuan gazetteers. Other scholars in Mainland China have also been busy recovering lost anecdotes, including Kang Baocheng 康保成, Cheng Hong 程弘 and Li Yumin 李裕民.

As regards the contents of the *Yijianzhi*, Zhang Furui 張馥蕊 published in 1968 “Le Yi Kien Tche et la societé des Song,” in *Journal Asiatique*, which analyzes the different levels of society as represented through the pages of the *Yijianzhi* and attempts to categorize story themes according to content. Under the category of “divinities et monde fantastique” for example, Zhang discusses the subcategories of demons and divination and magic, categories relevant for my study. In 1976, he also published a useful index of the *Yijianzhi* using the French transcription
system. It consists of four detailed indices, which include the names of persons and professions, geographical locations, and also books quoted in or from the *Yijianzhi*. Scanning the index of people’s names gives an indication of the various types of persons that Hong Mai collected his stories from. On a single page one finds prostitutes, officials, merchants, doctors and Daoist priests listed together.

Even though his collection included tales about the lower classes, Hong Mai’s stories were obviously gathered for a literate audience. They are tales of the lower classes as seen through the eyes of the elite. Written in classical Chinese, Hong Mai’s books were inaccessible to common working people. Patricia Ebrey has commented that during the Song the educated class grew rapidly, largely due to economic expansion and easier access to books. The invention of printing facilitated easier transmission of ideas and people had access to a wider body of texts. The expansion of the civil service examination system also contributed to an increase in the number of educated men. “For every man who attempted the civil service examinations,” Ebrey writes, “a dozen must have gone to school long enough to learn to read or write but not enough to master the classics. It thus became more likely that every county, if not yet every market town, had schools and learned men.”

Among the elite and newly educated, Hong Mai’s tales were popular and circulated widely. He writes in the preface to his second volume:

After finishing [the last installment] of the *Yijianzhi*, it circulated among scholars and gentry. Now it is printed in Min, Shu, Wuzhou, and Lin’an, almost every household has a copy. People feel I have an interest in the strange and every time a strange event occurs, someone from afar writes to tell me. Therefore, in five years,

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29 Hong Mai is referring to regions in the present-day provinces of Fujian, Sichuan and Zhejiang. The Jianyang region of northern Fujian was one of the most important centers of the booktrade during the Song and Yuan. The first four installments of the *Yijianzhi* were printed in Jianyang. See Lucille Chia, “The Development of the Jianyang Booktrade, Song-Yuan,” *Late Imperial China* 17.1 (1996): 10-48.
I have once again collected as many stories as my last collection. All together the stories in jia and yi total six hundred; all the strange events under heaven are gathered here.30

Hong Mai's remarks are indicative of the increasingly worldly society in which he lived. After the Jurchen invasion of northern China and the transfer of the Song capital from Kaifeng to Hangzhou in 1127, people witnessed important new changes in commercial development, the arts and religion. The influx of people moving from the north affected the southern regions dramatically and urban centres grew at an astonishing rate. As Valerie Hansen points out, "Cities burst out of their walls, markets sprung up in villages, and city and countryside did not develop different cultural identities as they did in Europe."31 The shift of population from north to south as well as the merging of cities and rural areas meant that people were exposed to a wider range of customs and beliefs than their predecessors. Zhiguai compilers such as Hong Mai could hear of strange stories that not only occurred in their hometowns, but from distant regions as well.

1.3 Background of the Yijianzhi

The title of the Yijianzhi comes from a story in the Liezi, preserved in the chapter titled “Tangwen” (The questions of Tang). Mentioned in the story is the mythical figure of Yijian, who recorded many strange and marvelous things that he heard. In the story, Emperor Tang is in discussion with his censor in chief Xia Ge. He asks Xia, "Have there always been things?" As Xia answers, the emperor persists in his questions, one of which is, "Are there large things and small, long and short, similar and different?" Xia's lengthy reply includes a reference to Yijian.32

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30 Hong Mai, Yijianzhi, yizhi preface.
31 Hansen, Changing Gods, 5.
32 Liezi, Tangwen, section 5.
Four hundred thousand miles Eastward from the Middle Kingdom, we come to the kingdom of Chiao-yao, where the people are one foot five inches high. In the far North East there are people called the *cheng*, who are nine inches high. To the South of Ch'u, there is the *ming-ling* tree, which grows through a spring of five hundred years, declines through an autumn of five hundred years. In ancient times there was a great *ch'un* tree, whose spring and autumn were eight thousand years each. There is a fungus which grows in manure, which is born in the morning and dies by evening. In the spring and summer months there are gnats which are born when it rains and die when they see the sun. To the North of the utmost North there is an ocean, the Lake of Heaven. There is a fish there, several thousand miles broad and long in proportion, named the *k'un*. There is a bird there named the *p'eng*, with wings like clouds hanging from the sky, and a body big in proportion. How is the world to know that such things exist? The Great Yu saw them in his travels, Po-yi knew of them and named them, Yi-chien heard of them and recorded them.33

Hong Mai likely chose this title for his collection because he saw himself playing a role akin to that of Yijian as a recorder of the strange and marvelous. Whereas Great Yu and Boyi are active participants in the marvelous events they encounter, Yijian is their scribe, writing down their experiences for all to understand and enjoy. The tales Hong Mai gathered in the *Yijianzhi* are extraordinary in nature, comparable to the stories of fantastic creatures and lands recorded by Yijian. In Table I on the following page, we can see that almost seventy percent of the stories recorded by Hong Mai deal with supernatural beings and fantastic phenomena.

Table I. *Yijianzhi* Contents Divided by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Stories</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Dreams</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Humans</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Supernatural Beings</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Flora and Fauna</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Objects</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Phenomena</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Poems</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Other</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see from this table that Hong Mai had a particular interest in supernatural events. In compiling tales heard from friends, relatives and other informants, he presents the world of the supernatural in the Song as it has been seen, heard and commented upon.

**1.4 The *Yijianzhi* and the Zhiguai Tradition**

Examining the *Yijianzhi*’s position in the *xiaoshuo* tradition and its relationship to the subgenre of *zhiguai* gives us a better understanding of the nature of Hong Mai’s work. The contemporary definition of *xiaoshuo*, translated as “fiction” or “novel,” is a far departure from its original meaning. The literal meaning, “trifling talk,” implies that *xiaoshuo* originally had little to do with fiction and more to do with the oral nature of storytelling. As Chan notes, what the early compilers and writers of *xiaoshuo* were concerned with was not fiction per se “but the

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element of talk, of conversational exchange.”\(^{35}\)

According to Campany, the *Xinlun* 新論 of Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 43 B.C.-28 AD) was the earliest use of the term *xiaoshuo* to designate a category of literature. Campany quotes from Huan, who comments on the nature of *xiaoshuo*,

Those in the tradition of *xiaoshuo* collect fragmentary and petty utterances, and draw analogous discussions from near at hand, to make short books. But [these writings] contain words worth heeding on the subjects of self-control and the regulation of one’s family.\(^{36}\)

Huan provides early evidence of the oral nature of *xiaoshuo*. Though he regards *xiaoshuo* as rather inconsequential, he does see some value in “petty utterances.” It appears from the above passage that he considered *xiaoshuo* to have some intrinsic moral worth, regardless of its trivial nature.

The Han historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 A.D.) wrote in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (Han history), “The writers of the school of *xiaoshuo* find their information in unofficial histories and in street gossip.”\(^{37}\) He includes fifteen titles in the *xiaoshuo* section of his *Yiwenzhi*艺文志 (Monograph on belles lettres). Ban Gu writes,

The *xiaoshuo* tradition probably originated from the “Fine Grain” Office. Its works were created from the “hearing in the highroad and retelling in the lane”\(^{38}\) of street-conversation and alley stories. As Confucius said, “Even the minor arts are sure to have their worthwhile aspects. But if pursued too far they tend to prove a hindrance, for which

\(^{35}\) Chan, “Text and Talk,”36.


\(^{37}\) *Hanshu*, 4.30.

\(^{38}\) *Lunyu* 論語,17:14.
reason the superior man does not practice them.”\(^{39}\) Although that is so, neither are they to be destroyed. Even things touched on by villagers of some little knowledge were collected together and not forgotten, lest they contain just one saying that could be selected out—even though they were [but] the discussions of woodcutters and madmen.\(^{40}\)

This statement from Ban Gu, similar to that of Huan Tan, emphasizes the spoken nature of xiaoshuo. Ban Gu makes clear his views on the insignificant nature of xiaoshuo and its concern with lowly subject matter. However, he also stresses that despite its insignificance, it may contain some valuable gleanings of information and therefore should be preserved.

The Ming critic Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (fl. 1590) commented that xiaoshuo belonged to the traditional bibliographic category of philosophers but also shared traits with the classics, history and literary collections. Hu separated xiaoshuo 小說 into six categories:

1. Miscellaneous categories  zalu 雜錄
2. Collected anecdotes  congtan 叢談
3. Documented sources  bianding  辨訂
4. Exhortatory writings  zhengui  節規
5. Records of the Strange  zhiguai  志怪
6. Marvelous stories  chuanqi  傳奇

Here, the two subgenres of xiaoshuo, zhiguai and chuanqi, appear as separate categories of literature for the first time. The terms had circulated previously in earlier dynasties, mainly in

\(^{39}\) Lunyu, 19.4.
\(^{40}\) Translation by Campany, Strange Writing, 132.
titles of book collections.\textsuperscript{41} Under the category of zhiguai, Hu includes the collections *Soushenji* (In search of the supernatural), *Shuyiji* (Accounts of strange things), *Xuanshizhi* (Palace chamber records) and *Youyang zazu* (A bibliophile’s salmagundi).\textsuperscript{42} He separates zhiguai from the closely related category of chuanqi, though he provides no specific criteria for his distinction.\textsuperscript{43}

There has been considerable debate for years about the difference between the two genres of chuanqi and zhiguai. Zhiguai have been commonly thought of as inferior to the more complex, human-centred chuanqi. Both genres do have notable differences. Chuanqi often incorporate a wide variety of writing styles in a single story, and there is more attention to characterization than in zhiguai. On the other hand, although zhiguai tales are identified as being overly concerned with the strange, chuanqi tales also contain many notable strange events. Often the two genres overlap and are difficult to distinguish. Both genres show an interest in the spirit-world and in interactions between the living and the dead.

The preface of the *Guangyiji* gives an idea of how the term zhiguai was interpreted in medieval China. The author of the preface, the poet and painter Gu Kuang 顧況 (d.806+), presents a long list of texts containing supernatural content that he refers to as zhiguai. He writes,

> The men who recorded strange things: Liu Tzu-cheng’s *Illustrious Immortals* and Ko Chih-ch’uan’s *Gods and Immortals*, Wang Tzu-nien’s *Neglected Things Gathered Up* and Tung-fang Shuo’s *Gods and Marvels*; Chang Mao-hsien’s *Manifold Knowledge* and Kuo Tzu-heng’s *Insights Into Obscurity*; Yen Huang-men’s *Scrutiny of the Superhuman*

\textsuperscript{41} Six Dynasty collections with zhiguai in their titles include: Zhiguai 志怪 (Accounts of anomalies), Zhiguaiji 志怪記 (Records of anomalies), *Xushi zhiguai* (Xu’s accounts of anomalies), Zhiguailu 志怪錄 (Records of anomalies) and Zhiguaizhuan 志怪傳 (Records of anomalies).


\textsuperscript{43} Hu Yinglin, *Xiaoshi shanfang biecong* 少室山房筆叢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964), 2:374.
and Hou Chun-su's *Signal Wonders*. Among them, some spiritual and profound: Master Ku's *Declarations of the Perfected* and Chou's *Communications with the Unseen World*.

And as for the *Assembly of Marvels* and the *Spirits Searched Out*, the *Scriptures of Mountains and Seas*, and the *Transcripts of the Otherworld*, the *Ancients of Hsiang-yang* and the *Former Worthies of Ch'ü*, the *Universal Principles of Manners and Customs* and the *Recording of Seasonal Observances*, *Wu-hsing* and *Yang-hsien*, *Southern Yueh* and *Western capital*, *Glosses Upon Things Ancient and Modern* and *writings entitled The Huai and the Ocean*, P'ei Sung-chih and Shen Hung-chih, Lu Tao-chan...—all these produced testimony in a luxuriant, unending abundance.

Under our own dynasty—...[and Chang] Yen-[kung's] *Tale of the Four Gentleman of Liang*, T'ang Lin's *Records of Retribution from the Other World* and Wang Tu's *Memoir Concerning an Ancient Mirror*, K'ung Shen-yen's *Record of Gods and Demons* and Chao Tzu-chen's *Records of Destiny Preordained*; and then the likes of Li Yu-ch'eng and Chang Hsiao-chu—they pass the testimony on, one to another.  

In this preface, Gu Kuang begins with a comment on “The men who recorded strange things,” borrowing from a phrase first used by Zhuangzi. Gu Kuang provides an assortment of supernatural anecdotes and stories that range from incidents recorded in the third-century B.C. *Zuozhuan*, through Six Dynasties and Tang collections like the *Soushenji* and the *Mingbaoji*. From the texts listed in this example, it does not appear as if Gu Kuang was aware of any

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45 The original phrase in *Zhuangzi* that includes the term *zhiguai* states “The man Qi Xie 齊説 was one who recorded strange things”(齊説者志怪者也) which appears in the chapter *Xiaoyaoyou*. This phrase may have inspired later authors to use the word *zhiguai* for their own works. Whether or not Qi Xie was a real person or a title of a collection is uncertain. See Campany, *Strange Writing*, 151, n. 120.
specific characteristic of zhiguai beyond the supernatural.

An investigation into Chinese literary history shows an interest in recording strange stories that extends back to ancient times. Early accounts of the strange circulated by mouth, being part of a vast oral tradition that provided the foundation for many later works of classical and vernacular literature. Authors were largely anonymous and incorporated popular legends and folklore into their stories. Many later zhiguai themes developed out of pre-Han magico-religious beliefs regarding the world of the dead, repeatedly demonstrating the proximity of the netherworld and the ability of humans and spirits to engage in cross-boundary contact.

The writing of strange stories continued unabated from the Han through the Qing. The Zhongguo congshu zonglu (A comprehensive catalogue of Chinese collectanea) lists over one hundred items in its section on zhiguai. The first entry listed is Shenyiji (The classic of spirits and anomalies), a Han collection, and the last is Shuolin 說林 (Forest of talk) of the Qing. For the Southern Song, the Yijianzhi is listed along with thirteen other collections of zhiguai.46

Accounts of strange and portentous phenomena were commonly recorded in early histories. Classics such as the Zuozhuan 左傳, Shiji 史記 and Chunqiu 春秋 are filled with stories of ghosts, omens, and unexplainable events. These classics were influential in determining the structure and narrative style of future zhiguai. DeWoskin writes,

The recording of anomalies had a legitimate precedent and precise formal model in the dynastic history tradition. The Grand Historian Ssu-ma Ch’ien and his father Ssu-ma T’an were first and foremost court astrologers, charged with the responsibility of observing ordinary and extraordinary phenomena in nature and interpreting them as they

46 Zhongguo congshu zonglu (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 1082-1094.
bore on the emperor’s administration of government among men.\textsuperscript{47}

DeWoskin suggests that during the Han attitudes regarding what was considered acceptable to be included in official histories began to change. Tales of ghosts and other weird phenomena began to be regarded by many scholars as implausible history and not suitable for historical records. Stories containing strange subject matter preserved information and incidents that had been omitted from official histories. A large number of collections from the Han onwards appeared in independent collections and were exclusively devoted to strange stories.

A proliferation of zhiguai appeared during the Six Dynasties. Their titles reveal a strong interest in documenting strange events and reflect an almost obsessive interest in the supernatural. The Soushenji, compiled by the Eastern Jin historian Gan Bao 干寶 (fl. 320), was one of the most influential zhiguai collections to appear in this period. It contains over 465 supernatural anecdotes ranging from accounts of demonic bewitchment to tales of war and famine. Other Six Dynasty titles include Mingxiangji 冥祥記 (Signs of the unseen world), Youminglu 幽明錄 (Records of the hidden and visible worlds), and Shuyuji 述異記 (Accounts of strange things).

Because zhiguai stories did not fit into existing categories of literature such as the classics, philosophy or history, authors of zhiguai compilations appealed to the historiographic tradition to lend credence to their works. They identified the stories they recorded with a particular place and time, and many stories are associated with well-known historical events. Zhiguai, Campany explains, were an extension of history writing:

...At bottom, anomaly accounts were new wine in old bottles; they were a casting of familiar nets of historical, geographical, and biographical writing over an ever more

\textsuperscript{47} DeWoskin, “Chih-kuai and the Birth of Fiction,” 40.
demarcated, isolated, and articulated domain of objects that shared the fundamental taxonomic marker of being anomalous – most of them anomalous in some “dark” or “hidden” (ming 冥, you 幽) way. 48

Gan Bao, in his preface to the Soushenji, writes that he desired his work to be judged alongside other works of history:

Even though we examine ancient fragments in the written documents and collect bits and pieces which have come to the present time, these things are not what has been heard or seen by one person’s own ears and eyes. How would one dare say there are no inaccuracies? Note the account of Wei Shuo’s losing the country. The two commentaries are at odds in the information they obtained. Note the account of Lu Wang’s service to Chou. In the Shih-chi alone there are two different versions. Examples of this type occur again and again. From this evidence we can see that problems in the witnessing of events have existed since ancient times.

Even in writing the words of a funerary announcement or following the manuals of the official historians, one finds places where it is difficult to write accurately. How much more difficult, then, is looking back to narrate events of a past one thousand years ago, writing down the characteristics of distant and peculiar ways of life, stringing together word fragments between textual faults and fissures, questioning the elderly about events in former times! If one must have historical events without any discrepancies, have words in every text agree and only then regard them as veritable, then this point will surely seem a defect of previous historians.

48 Campany, Strange Writing, 158.
Nevertheless, the state does not eliminate the office charged with writing commentaries on historical documents, and scholars do not cease in their recitations of the texts. Is this not because what is lost is inconsequential and what is preserved is vital? As for what I am putting together now, when they are items gotten from previous accounts, the fault is not mine. In the event they are from recent happenings which I have collected and discovered, should there be errors or omissions, I would hope to share the ridicule and condemnation with scholars and worthies of the past.

Coming now to what these records contain, it is enough to make clear that the spirit-world is not a lie. On this subject, the countless words and the hundred differing schools are too much even to scan. And what one perceives with one’s own eyes and ears is too much to write down. So I have lumped together records that are just adequate to express the main points of the “eight categories,” provide some trivial accounts. That is all.

I will count myself fortunate if in the future curious scholars come along, note the bases of these stories and find things within them to enlighten their hearts and fill their eyes. And I will be fortunate as well to escape reproach for this book.49

In this preface, Gan Bao distinguishes his work from other histories by narrowing his subject matter to include almost exclusively otherworldly events and strange phenomena. An historian himself, he desires that the Soushenji be accepted as a work of history, in spite of its strange subject matter. He defends his work by claiming that all historians are capable of historical inaccuracies. Time and perspective, according to Gan Bao, cause difficulties for the historian when reconstructing a historical event.49

In addition, by writing that “the way of spirits is not a lie,” Gan Bao was disproving the arguments of skeptics who claimed that the spirit-world was a fabrication. In early China, literati had long been debating the existence of spirits. Many adopted the classical Confucian attitude towards the supernatural that was against talking of prodigies, feats of strength, disorder, and spirits. Critics dismissed reports of ghost encounters as hallucinatory and tried to find rational explanations for things they could not explain. Believers referred to actual experiences to defend themselves.

One of the most outspoken of early skeptics of the supernatural was the Han philosopher Wang Chong 王充 (27-91 A.D.) who in his famous Lunheng 論衡 (Arguments weighed in the balance) provided a rational explanation for spirit encounters based on cosmological principles. He devotes several chapters of the text to topics on ghosts, death, and “records of the monstrous.” In one passage, Wang challenges the existence of consciousness after death: “A man before birth resides in the primal breath (yuan-ch’i 元氣) and returns to it after death. Before birth a man has no consciousness; upon death a man returns to the origin of consciousness (wu-chih chih pen 無知之本). How can he still possess consciousness?” Through arguments such as this, Wang Chong refutes the existence of paranormal phenomena in light of known principles about the afterlife.

Ying Shao’s 應劭 (140-206 A.D.) Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義 (A penetrating account of manners and customs), also evinces a critical view of the supernatural. This text was written in the latter half of the first century A.D. as the Han dynasty was disintegrating into chaos. Ying Shao saw that the decline of the Han could be largely attributed to faulty transmission of the

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98 Lunyu, 7: 22.
classics. An examination of popular tradition and beliefs could hold the key to rectifying the problems of his time. Campany explains:

Preoccupied as he was with the decline in knowledge and virtue from the era of Confucius to his own day, he saw anomalous beliefs and customs as holding twin keys to the exemplary past: if they provided an objective measure of the degree to which culture had degenerated since antiquity, they also, for that same reason, constituted a real if distorted link with the past; they served as so many confirmations, in actual popular practice and discourse, of the contents of the classics. Once subjected to a corrective hermeneutic, they could be read as gateways to an otherwise quickly and disturbingly receding past.  

An area that Ying Shao identifies as needing rectification concerns misunderstandings about the nature of the spirit world. Chapter nine of the Fengsu tongyi, titled “Guaishen” (Strange spirits), gives examples of stories describing supposed encounters with spirits, which are later proved wrong by Confucian scholars. Ying Shao presents stories he had heard through his own family or acquaintances and attempts to show that improperly founded beliefs in spirits or divinities can be harmful or absurd. He gives as an example a story about a man who leaves a plum pit in the hollow of a mulberry tree and when the mulberry tree later bears plums, the tree is thought to be inhabited by a divine spirit. A version of this story is recorded in the Soushenji:

Chang Chu from Nan-tun was in his field planting crops when he came upon a plum pit he wanted to save. He looked about and spied a mulberry tree with a hollow hole in which some earth had collected, and he put the plum pit there. He emptied his water bottle on it as well.

Campany, Strange Writing, 338.
Afterward, people saw a mulberry tree unexpectedly bearing plums and remarked to each other about it. One day someone with a painful eye disease rested in the shade of the tree and cried out, "Oh Lord of the Plums, make my eyes better, and I will sacrifice a shoat to you in gratitude." His eye trouble was actually a minor disorder and later cleared up by itself.

However, as with dogs barking, each person excited another with the story of the blind having sight restored, until there were often thousands of horses and carriages about the tree, and wine and meat sacrifices rained down on it.

A little more than a year later Chang Chu returned from a distant journey and witnessed all this. Startled, he cried, "There is no deity here," said he, "I planted this myself!" Thereupon, he cut the tree down.

In addition to criticizing unfounded beliefs in spirits, throughout chapter nine Ying Shao emphasizes that a faith in the virtue of the Confucian classics can conquer and subdue unruly entities. If approached by a malevolent spirit, Ying Shao contends, an exemplary official should remain calm and not show any fear. Chanting from the classics will force the spirit to retreat or die, and the official will be rewarded with a promotion to a higher office. A cultivated person who follows the teachings of Confucius, has a firm grounding in the classics and behaves in an upright fashion, will not be harmed.

Ying Shao approaches the supernatural not as a disbeliever but as a skeptic of ideas and beliefs that lead to impropriety and loss of virtue. By examining supernatural accounts and how they deviated from the canonical norms of the Confucian tradition, he presents a challenge to his contemporaries, whom he believes have distorted the teachings of the past.

Trans. by DeWoskin, In Search of the Supernatural, 60.

One of the most outspoken of critics during the Six Dynasties was Ruan Zhan (210-310) whose treatise on “no ghosts” (wugui lun 無鬼論) made his arguments the centrepiece for debates over the supernatural for years to come. One humorous example of Ruan Zhan’s refusal to believe in ghosts is recorded in the Soushenji:

Juan Chan [Ruan Zhan] (T. Ch’ien Li) simply held that there were no ghosts. His defense of the position no one could overturn. He stoutly maintained that his arguments could adequately explain life and death, darkness and light.

One day a visitor sent his name to Juan, and after they had dealt with commonplaces such as the weather, the talk turned to the study of School of Names logic, and the visitor proved quite a capable disputant. After Chan had spoken with him for some time, the topic became gods and ghosts. The argument went back and forth spiritedly, but finally the visitor capitulated.

Flushed, he said: “From time immemorial, saints and sages have passed down to us knowledge of ghosts. Why do you alone sir, maintain that there are no ghosts. I ask you this especially because, you see, I am one!”

With that, the visitor changed form and shortly melted away. Chan remained silent and was much discountenanced. In a little over a year he sickened and died.56

A story such as this highlights one of the fundamental purposes of the zhiguai genre which was to demonstrate that the spirit-world was real. The stories give vivid portrayals of the realities of ghosts and demons and demonstrate the interconnectedness of this world and the next. Accounts of firsthand experience bolstered the arguments of believers and provided evidence in the face of attacks.

56 Gan Bao, Soushenji, trans. by DeWoskin, In Search of the Supernatural, 184.
In the Six Dynasties, the influence of Buddhism generated new ideas about the spirit-world, spurring the debate over the reality of the supernatural. As the religion expanded, it often faced intense resistance and hostility from the ruling classes. Buddhist beliefs concerning karma, hell, celibacy and reincarnation were seen by many as a foreign threat to Chinese stability. As a result, Buddhism faced intermittent persecution. The spread of Buddhism in China occurred simultaneously with the rise of zhiguai and advocates of the religion sought to use the medium to advance and defend their beliefs. Some important collections of Buddhist zhiguai during this period include the Xuanyanjili (Records in proclamation of manifestations), Mingxiangji, and the Yuanhunzhi (A treatise on cloud-souls with grievances).

Buddhist zhiguai were overwhelmingly concerned with karmic retribution and the punishments awaiting the wicked in the afterlife. One of the most popular themes is that of the underworld journey, in which an unlucky human is taken to hell and witnesses all of the tools of torture applied to the wicked. The human is then released back into the world of the living and must bear witness to the truth of the Buddha’s teachings. Other stories demonstrate the superiority of the Buddhist in encounters with the spirit-world. By reciting sutras and precepts, a practitioner could subdue angry ghosts and demons and even convert them. In these stories control over the supernatural was not only for the adept. The lay person could, if devout enough, perform supra-normal feats.

Daoists also used zhiguai stories to propagate their beliefs. Texts such as the Shiyiji 拾遺記 (Uncollected records), Liexianzhuang 列仙傳 (Biographies of illustrious immortals) and the

57 One of the most infamous persecutions was carried out by Emperor Wu of the Northern Wei (r. 424-52) who issued an edict in 446 ordering the abolition of the Buddhist religion. He ordered all Buddhist images, temples and scriptures to be burned. He also ordered the return to laity of all Buddhist monks, regardless of age. Escaping monks had their heads cut off and displayed as a warning to practitioners of the religion. See Daisaku Ikeda, The Flower of Chinese Buddhism, trans. by Burton Watson (Tokyo: John Weatherhill, Inc. 1986), 155.

Hanwu bieguo dongmingji 漢武別國洞冥記 (The records of Emperor Wu of Han’s insights into obscurity) attempted to persuade readers that Daoist adepts had the power to transcend the limitations of the ordinary world. Through special disciplined practice and access to magical techniques, Daoists demonstrated power over material elements and freedom from death, aging and other worldly concerns. Followers liberated themselves from the ways of the world, contesting strongly the Confucian worldview. The stories tell of distant lands of paradise, quests for immortality, and encounters with celestials.

The Tang dynasty saw a continuation of these debates over the existence of the spirits. Charles Hammond, in his study of the Tang stories in the Taiping guangji, has noted that the majority of authors writing supernatural stories believed their works to be true and often accepted as factual by their readers. He bases his claim on statements written by the authors themselves and on evidence drawn from the stories. He quotes from Duan Chengshi 段成式 (803-863 A.D. ?), who wrote these remarks in the preface of his Youyang zazu:

When the commentary in the Book of Changes speaks of a cartful [of ghosts], it comes close to the weird, and when the poets [in the Book of Songs] use the simile of the constellation of the Winnowing Fan, they are almost playful. Decidedly, for one who wears the official’s robe to casually write now of the weird, now of the playful is no encroachment on his role as the Confucian. [The stories are unlike] the Book of Songs and the Book of Documents that have the flavor of thick, meaty soup, the histories that are plates of dried meats, and the philosophers that are pickled meat paste. But if one has

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60 Hammond notes that this is an allusion to hexagram 38 of the Yijing (Book of changes): (He fancies) there is a carriage full of ghosts.” Trans. by James Legge, The Sacred Books of China, vol. 2 (London: Clarendon Press, 1926).
61 Hammond believes this is a referral to a constellation, part of Sagittarius. From the Shijing (Book of songs), “Dadong 大東,” 203: “In the south there is a winnowing fan, but it cannot sift or raise the chaft.” Trans. by Arthur Waley, The Book of Songs (London: Allen and Unwin, 1937).
only heavy meat dishes like roast owl and turtle, how can one start using one's chopsticks [to eat them]? So those that serve us without apology [as side dishes] are the books of xiaoshuo of accounts of marvels. My studies are inferior, my writing inelegant, and I am no deep thinker. I am no Ts'ui Yin who could provoke the praise of a true dragon,$^{62}$ but rather like K'ung Chang in his failure to draw the true likeness of a tiger.$^{63}$

Taking the time when I have a full stomach, I have occasionally recorded things I have remembered, and called them *A Bibliophile's Salmagundi*, which altogether includes thirty chapters, which makes up twenty scrolls, but I do not record them for their intrinsic taste.$^{64}$

Like Gan Bao, Duan defends the nature of his work against those who may have found it trivial. He mentions that even the classics contained weird stories and to be a Confucian does not mean one cannot be playful. His stories, likened to side dishes, give flavour to meatier fare. Duan also remarks that he has recorded things he has remembered, and though many sources go unnamed in his collection, he often includes his own commentary claiming the verifiability of his work.

In the Tang, Buddhists and Daoists continued to expound their beliefs through *zhiguai* despite criticism from scholars such as Lu Zhangyuan 廖長源 (fl. 796) who saw religious stories as being full of superstitions.$^{65}$ The majority of Buddhist stories stressed the same themes of hell and retribution that appeared in Six Dynasty texts. Collections like the *Mingbaozhi* 冥報志 (Records of dark retribution) and *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (Pearl forest of the dharma garden) contain stories, often graphic in nature, of persons sent to hell to be punished for their sins.

$^{62}$ Hammond notes that in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Records of the Later Han), chapter 40, Ts'ui Yin (Cui Yin) “is likened to a dragon who is not sufficiently appreciated.” See Hammond, 94.

$^{63}$ Hammond claims that this sentence incorrectly refers to Gong Chang, but should actually be Ma Yuan, who is recorded in the *Hou Hanshu* as likening his painting of a dragon to a dog.


Others are reincarnated into animals.\textsuperscript{66} The \textit{Yuanhuaji} \textsuperscript{1} (Record of the origins of transformations) is an example of a collection that propagated Daoist beliefs of immortality and transcendence. Many stories are about earthly heroes who visit celestial kingdoms and transform into immortals.\textsuperscript{67}

During the Song, debates about the existence of ghosts and spirits gradually tempered. Chan suggests that “the fear and curiosity towards the supernatural of earlier times gradually gave way to a more relaxed and dispassionate approach.”\textsuperscript{68} He uses the example of Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101 A.D.), who was one among many Song literati who showed an interest in strange stories. According to Chan, Su Shi’s contemporary, Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077-1148 A.D.), in his \textit{Bishu luhua} 避暑錄話 (Record of talk while taking a summer retreat) records that Su Shi liked to invite guests to his home and tell ghost stories.\textsuperscript{69} Two chapters of Su Shi’s \textit{Dongpo zhilin} 東坡志林 (Records of the eastern slope) are titled “\textit{Yishi}”異事 (Strange matters).”\textsuperscript{70} Chan writes,

In noting that Su Shi’s friends ‘laughed to their hearts’ delight on hearing the ghost stories,’ Ye Mengde was underscoring the jovial mood in which the stories were told and taken. It is not surprising that Su Shi, popularly known for his convivial character and his fondness for socializing, has become associated by tradition with this mode of \textit{zhiguai} narration.\textsuperscript{71}

Hong Mai, like Su Shi, filled the pages of the \textit{Yijianzhi} with strange stories he had collected from visitors and friends. He writes in the preface of his sixth collection, “Already old, I have no interest in serious reading and only like strange tales as I did when I was younger.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Taiping guangji}, 102, 131, 132, 134, 434.  
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Taiping guangji}, 34, 35, 49, 35, 41.  
\textsuperscript{68} Chan, \textit{Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts}, 51.  
\textsuperscript{69} Chan, \textit{Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts}, 52.  
\textsuperscript{70} Su Shi, \textit{Dongpo zhilin} (Records of the eastern slope), Congshu jicheng, vol. 2850 (Changsha: Shangwuyin shuguan, 1939), 30-52.  
\textsuperscript{71} Chan, \textit{Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts}, 52.
Heaven has been kind to me: my ears are still good, and I can still enjoy the talk of guests."\textsuperscript{72}

However, there remained a need to justify the types of stories he collected. In an early preface, he asserts the truth-value of his stories by comparing the *Yijianzhi* with several other *zhiguai* collections of the past, including the *Soushenji*:

The strange stories of Qi Xie and Zhuangzi’s philosophical discussions are false and unsubstantiated.\textsuperscript{73} There is no way to verify them. Coming to Gan Bao’s *Soushenji*, Master Qi Zhang’s 吳章 *Xuanguai*, Master Gu Shen 谷神子 *Boyizhi* 博异志, and the collections *Hedong* 河東, *Xuanshi* 宣室 and *Qi Shen* 穆神, they are not without fables. Regarding my collection, all the works are within the span of sixty years. I’ve witnessed them myself and each is outstanding and well-founded. If you think that I am untrustworthy, there is no one else to ask.\textsuperscript{74}

Hong Mai defends the truth-value of the *Yijianzhi* by contrasting it to previous collections of *zhiguai*, such as the *Soushenji*, which he dismisses as “fables.” He claims that because his stories have been collected in the past few years and have verifiable sources, they must be true. In another preface, Hong Mai defends the nature of his work to a disapproving skeptic:

The four books of *jia*, *yi*, *bing* 丙 and *ding* 丁 record 1150 events, no less than 300,000 words. Someone laughed after reading them, saying, ‘The *Shijing* 詩經, *Shangshu* 尚書, *Yijing* 易經 and *Chunqiu* 春秋 are four books that all together don’t surpass 100,000 words. Sima Qian’s *Shiji* from beginning to end records several thousand years of events; at most it totals 800,000 words. You are unable to investigate the classics closely, entering a venerated tradition of studies. Instead, you spend thirty years

\textsuperscript{72} *Yijianzhi*, *zhiyi* 支乙 preface, trans. Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods*, 17.

\textsuperscript{73} See my note on Qi Xie, 19.

\textsuperscript{74} *Yijianzhi*, *yizhi* preface.
labouring with your heart, ears, eyes and mouth attending to the marvelous and fantastic. 

[Your collection], a waste of ink and paper, amounts to almost half of what the Grand Historian put together. Sprawling and disconnected, complicated and improvised—these are what the Sage would not discuss and Yang Ziyun 扬子雲 would not read. With your books, the world does not benefit a hair. Without them, what does the world lack? Already, this is too ridiculous, yet you still verify the sources. These stories do not necessarily come from worthy ministers and grandees of the past but from poor people, uncouth monks, mountain travelers, Daoist masters, blind shamans, village women, low-level clerks and servants. If you do not investigate, how can people verify these stories? Isn’t this more laughable?'

Hong Mai responds:

‘How can I dare make comment on the six classics that have passed through the hands of sages? With regard to the words of the Grand Historian, I would like to bear out what you have said. The events recorded by the Grand Historian about Duke Mu of the Qin 秦穆公 and Zhao Jianzi 趙簡子, are they not marvelous?’ The stories of

Yang Ziyun was a scholar of the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-25 A.D.).

Duke Mu was ruler of the Qin kingdom (r. 659-621 B.C.). He aggressively expanded Qin territory and established the kingdom as the dominant power during the Chunqiu era. According to what is recorded in the Shiji, shortly after the Duke came into power, he became ill and fell unconscious for five days. He dreamt that the Lord on High ordered him to not quell the revolts in the state of Jin. Upon waking, he told his dream to the court historians who recorded it. See Shiji, 28:6, [database on-line] (Zhongguo chuantong wenhua fazhanbu, 2000); available from http://www.guoxue.com/shibu/24 shi/ shiji/sj_028.html; accessed January 5, 2003. Also see Burton Watson’s translation of the Records of the Grand Historian, Shiji 28: “The Treatise on the Feng and Shan Sacrifices,” rev. ed., vol 2, (Han), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 8. Zhao Jianzi (? – 475), also known as Zhao An 趙鞍, was a nobleman during the late Chunqiu. He implemented a series of political and economic reforms that strengthened the powers of the Zhao kingdom. The Grand Historian records that Zhao Jianzhi, in a pattern similar to Duke Mu, became ill and was tended to by the physician Bian Que 扁鹊. While in a coma, Zhao Jianzhi had a strange dream. After two days of being unconscious, he woke up and told his ministers that he had met in his dream several rulers of previous dynasties. After killing two bears that sprang upon him, the rulers gave him a hunting dog for his courage and warned him that the kingdom of Jin would weaken and cease to exist after seven generations. Zhao Jianzhi’s minister Dong An 杜安 recorded his statement and told him of the dream of Duke Mu. Shiji105:45, http://www.guoxue.com/shibu/24 shi/ shiji/sj_105.html; accessed January 5, 2003.
Shenjun 神君 of Changling 長陵 and Master Huangshi 黃石公 under the bridge, are they not absurd?77 When the Grand Historian wrote about the affairs of Jing Ke 荊軻, he confirmed the accounts with the Royal Physician Xia Wuqie 夏無且.78 When writing about the appearance of the marquis of Liu, he confirmed the account with a painter. Physicians and painters—how are they different from the aforementioned poor people, shamans and clerks? No one follows in the tradition of the Grand Historian better than myself. Hold your tongue and give your laughter a rest.79

Hong Mai justifies his methods of collecting stories by likening himself to the Grand Historian, who also relied on sources to verify his stories. As evident from this exchange, the type of stories that Hong Mai collected were not necessarily seen in a good light by those who considered themselves educated and respectable. Wanting to write about events that not only concerned the elite but also the lower levels of society must have been incomprehensible for some.


78 Jing Ke was a famous assassin from the late Warring States period. In 227 B.C. he was sent by the Prince of Yan to assassinate Ying Zheng 耿政, the king of Qin. The plot was discovered and he was killed on site by the king’s body guards. Xia Wuqie was in attendance when Jing Ke was killed. *Shiji* 6:6, http://www.guoxue.com/shibu/24shi/shiji/sj_06.html; accessed January 5, 2003. Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian, Shiji*, 6: “The Basic Annals of the First Emperor of the Qin,” (Qin), 40.

79 *Yijian zhi, dingzhi* preface.
Hong Mai also demonstrates his own belief in the supernatural by including stories about members of his own family. For example, he includes a story of his father, who encountered a ghost while serving at his post in Jiaxing, where Hong Mai was born.

There were many strange apparitions in the office of the record keeper (silu) in Xiuzhou (Jiaxing county, Zhejiang). One always wore a green kerchief and cloth robe, had a short and broad shape, and walked with slow and heavy steps. A woman also went out every night and bewitched and beat the runners.

When my father held this post, my older brother, the future Grand Counselor, was just nine years old. One day, he opened his eyes as if he saw something, stared and called out, “Water! Water!” After some time had passed, he regained consciousness.

Two days later, my father came home late from the office. A concubine grabbed his robe from behind, suddenly called out, and fell to the ground. My father had heard that ghosts feared leather belts, so he took one to bind the concubine and carried her to the bed. After a while, the ghost [speaking through the concubine] said, “This person has previously insulted ghosts and gods. At this moment, he holds in his right hand something very frightening. I don’t dare come any closer. He doesn’t know that I come from the left, have been captured and detained by an official who uses the Zhongkui [a famous demon queller] [sic] method. I will go immediately, without causing mutual difficulties.”

The story continues with Hong Hao demanding that the ghost identify itself. The ghost eventually explains that he is the ghost of a farmer named Stem Nine, who died two years earlier from starvation. Stem Nine explains that the other ghost, the one that Hong Mai’s brother encountered, was their former neighbour. Hong Hao does not understand how any ghosts could enter his home, as he is a worshiper of Zhenwu, a Daoist star divinity, as well as the Buddha and
Hong Hao is indignant that Buddha, as well as the earth and stove gods he worships, are not protecting his family properly from ghosts. Stem Nine informs Hong Hao,

The Buddha is a benevolent deity who does not concern himself with such trivial matters; every night Zhenwu unbinds his hair, grasps his sword, and flies from your roof. I carefully avoid him, that’s all. The earth god behind your house is not easily aroused. Only at the small temple in front of your house [to the stove god] am I reprimanded every time I’m seen. I just entered the kitchen, and His Lordship [the stove god] asked, “Where are you going?”

I answered, “I’m just looking around.”

He upbraided me, “You’re not allowed here.”
The ghost explains that he managed to gain access to the house through bribing the earth god with food. Hong Hao threatens to destroy the earth god’s shrine in retaliation. In the end, the earth god eventually expels the ghost because he has told Hong Hao too much.\(^{80}\)

This story is a good example of the wide array of choices among religious traditions that people had during the Song. In this story, we find the Buddha, Zhenwu from the Daoist pantheon, and stove and kitchen gods from popular tradition. There appears to be no particular preference for a certain religious tradition; the ultimate desire is to keep one’s household safe from intruding spirits. Any combination of gods and household deities would do, as long as they did their job.

An example like this not only shows Hong Mai’s own belief in ghosts and demons, it also provides an understanding of the ways in which denizens of the supernatural world were depicted in the Song. Educated persons of the Song (those of the pro-ghost faction, anyway) must have found these stories not only highly entertaining but edifying as well. Zhiguai stories,

like those contained within the *Yijianzhi*, were a reflection of the worldviews of their readers. Stories of ghosts and demons were popular because they contained elements of belief that people could relate to, thus contributing to the popularity of collections like the *Yijianzhi*.

1.5 The *Yijianzhi* and Oral Storytelling

The authors of *zhiguai* compilations gathered their tales from various sources and often the stories have identical plot structure with little variation, being very similar to what folklorists in the west call “belief legends.” The folklorist Jan Brunvand explains that “legends are told seriously, circulate largely by word of mouth, are generally anonymous, and vary constantly in particular details from one telling to another, while always preserving a central core of traditional elements or beliefs.” This statement can apply to many of the tales in the *Yijianzhi*. The stories, particularly those of the ghost or demon type, are remarkably similar in plot, though minor details often change, such as location or method of resolution. As with belief legends, there is an effort to authenticate the tales with names and dates. Insisting that a specific person encountered a particular event (the teller reporting that “this happened to so and so...”) reflects an effort to make an incredible legend more believable and to ground it firmly in reality.

Hanan notes that the term “folktale” may not necessarily apply to the *Yijianzhi* tales, “as the term does not discriminate among the genres of oral narrative.” In *The Chinese Short Story*, he examines the relationship of casual fiction to the short story and the importance of the *Yijianzhi* to early fiction in China. Casual fiction, consisting of stories embedded within conversations where the listener and teller mutually interact, make up a large percentage of tales included in the *Yijianzhi*. However, because the stories Hong Mai collected were written down in classical Chinese, they have not retained any strong markings of an oral tradition. This makes it extremely tricky to locate definite origins and influence. Hanan writes,

We do not know what the form of Hung Mai’s material was. Its simplicity in the I-chien chih could be deceptive. No oral fiction is entirely devoid of conventions, not even so lowly a form as the barrack-room yarn. In transcribing their stories into a different medium and a different language, it seems unlikely that Hung Mai and his informants even tried to provide correlatives for the features of oral fiction. It is much more likely that they allowed the conventions of Classical fiction to take over and mold the oral material.  

The oral storytelling behind the Yijianzhi belongs to a continuous tradition of discourse about the strange. The stories collected and recorded by Hong Mai are reflective of the interest that literati and educated persons of the Song held towards the paranormal. These stories of strange and fantastic events contain within them ancient beliefs of the otherworld that were shaped and transformed by the people who told them and their current social context.

1.6 Conclusion

The majority of the stories in the Yijianzhi have to do with supernatural beings, dreams and other phenomena. The stories were supposedly reported to Hong Mai by family, friends and others who had witnessed or heard of unexplainable events. Hong Mai’s informants provide accounts of extraordinary things that juxtapose with the everyday workings of the ordinary world. These stories give us a glimpse into the belief systems and values of medieval Chinese men and women. They shed new light on the view of the afterlife in medieval China and provide insight into previously unexplored, or feared, notions of life and death. In the next chapter, I will examine one particular category of zhiguai account that occupies an important place among the supernatural stories in the Yijianzhi: the demon story.

Chapter Two
The Demon in Chinese Society

2.1 Definitions

Critical studies of zhiguai have often focused attention on one particular type of supernatural being that commonly appears in the tales—the ghost. Scholars have frequently ignored the larger, more complex category of demon. To Chinese, ghosts and demons are both designated by the generic term gui 鬼, which refers not only to spirits of the deceased but also applies to demons, monsters and other diablerie. The term gui is homophonous with the word gui 歸 meaning “to return,” implying that a gui is literally a being that has “come back.”84 Evil spirits are also referred to in zhiguai as wu 物 (things), guai 怪 (anomalies), xie 邪 (malignancies), or yao 妖 (perversions), terms that indicate their ambiguous but potentially lethal nature. A gui may take on the persona of a dead person, but because of the ability to transform, can also appear as a plant, animal, object, or fallen deity. Campany notes some common misconceptions scholars have about gui:

These treatments share the mistaken notion that all terrestrial spiritual malefactors are ghosts, i.e. deceased humans, not recognizing that many of those malefactors, both in the novels and in popular culture, have never been humans, and that many are fallen celestials....these authors often focus too exclusively on the bureaucratic, human-society-reflecting nature of the hierarchy, missing the crucial point that it is not just humans who are promoted to rank, but all sorts of beings....While not wanting to deny the obvious society-reflecting aspects of Chinese religions, nor to argue with the characterization of the Chinese cosmos as highly bureaucratic in conception and imagery,

I would maintain nevertheless that these authors have to a large extent overlooked the larger set to which ghosts belong, namely demons. Virtually all demons in China have human-like features, but not all of them are former human beings (ghosts); some are celestials fallen to earth or plants/animals/objects spiritualized and capable of changing form at will. It is precisely the category-tension inherent in the expression *human-like*, implying both that X is *like* a human and that X is *not a human*, that generates the category of the demonic which, *as a category*, these authors largely neglect.  

The organization of some *zhiguai* collections further emphasizes the ambiguity of the term *gui*. The *Taiping guangji*, for example, contains chapters titled “Gui” (Spirits of the dead), “Yaoguai” (Monsters and weird transformations), “Yecha” (Yaksa demons), and “Jingguai” (Dangerous emanations from objects). Though ghosts and demons are placed in separate chapters, the term *gui* is used to refer to entities within the stories interchangeably. In addition to the four categories I have just listed, demons and ghosts also appear in many other chapters in the *Taiping guangji* including, but not limited to, foxes, dreams, shamans and Daoist arts. In contrast to the *Taiping guangji*, the *Yijianzhi* is less easy to categorize. The collection groups various types of demon and ghost stories together, making it impossible to infer what criteria Hong Mai used to organize his stories and how he envisioned them fitting together as a collection.

The boundaries between ghosts and demons are quite fluid and reflect the permeability of...
the Chinese spirit-world. Many gui possess human-like attributes and interact in a variety of situations with the living, being either harmful or munificent. Demons can be defined as types of gui that are fundamentally hazardous to humans and roam the earth intent on inflicting harm and destruction. Often a demon's behavior lacks justification and it can be blamed for a multitude of catastrophes including illness and natural disasters.

For the Chinese, gui are yin in nature, hence linked to the earth and identified with coldness, death, and darkness. The living are governed by the po 和 hun 魂 souls, which reside together in the human body and upon death these souls separate and leave the body. Hun, being composed of qi, the vital life force of all living creatures, goes upwards to heaven while the heavier po soul, being associated with the earth, moves downwards. The po soul, linked closely with the body, returns to the earth where the body is buried. If a body has not been buried properly or the person has died prematurely, by accident or suicide, the po soul will not find peace in the underworld. In the Zuozhuan is found the story of Baiyou 伯有, the ghost of a nobleman who comes back to the human world to seek vengeance for his murder. The statesman Zichan 子産 appeases Baiyou and the spirit eventually disappears. Later, Zichan explains to a friend the concept of hun and po:

When man is born, that which is first created, is called the p’o and, when the p’o has been formed, its positive part (yang) becomes hun or conscious spirit. In case a man is materially well and abundantly supported, then his hun and p’o grow very strong, and therefore produce spirituality and intelligence. Even the hun and p’o of an ordinary man and woman, having encountered violent death, can attach themselves to other people who cause extraordinary troubles...The stuff Po-yu was made of was copious and rich, and his family great and powerful. Is it not natural that, having met with a violent death, he
should be able to become a ghost?®

As one can see from this excerpt, persons who have suffered from unfortunate deaths are capable of becoming vengeance seekers. These unhappy souls come back to the living to rectify the harm that has been done to them. The avenging ghost is one of the most well-known figures in zhiguai.

Gui are closely associated with qi and jing, the two dominant components of the human body. Qi is the energy that flows through special channels in the human body; jing ("essence") is heavier than ethereal qi and exists in the bone marrow, sperm and menstrual blood. When qi and jing are combined, they form a human fetus. Both elements are not only present in human beings but in otherworld entities as well. Gui are seen as malignant manifestations of qi and jing. When the worn-out or "stale" qi (often termed yaoqi, "perverse force" or "perverse breath") of an otherworld being invades an unwary human, disease and/or death result.

Jing essence accumulated in objects has been blamed for many strange and inexplicable events. There are zhiguai accounts of people bewitched by plants, stones, or even broomsticks. As mentioned, the Taiping guangji has an entire chapter devoted to stories of jing bewitchment, and the Yijianzhi also contains stories of people enchanted by objects. In one of these, a young woman is visited nightly by a demonic being whose essence is linked to long-forgotten buried coins. When the coins are dug up and smashed, the visitations cease. Another woman is possessed by the essence of a stone lion.®

2.2 Ghosts vs. Demons

Although gui can refer either to ghosts or demons, stories contain distinctive features

® Yijianzhi, bingzhi, 10:8; zhiguai, 4:11.
depending on whether they are concerned with the former or the latter. Underlying most ghost stories is the concept of bao or moral obligation. A dead person lays a claim on a human being and the human can either acknowledge the spirit and give it what it requests or ignore it.

A large number of ghost tales concern restless ghosts who return from the dead to seek assistance or to repay a human for debts owed or services rendered. Restless ghosts in particular are those that have not had proper funeral rites or have suffered a violent death. They often return to the living to punish and seek retribution. Humans can also cross into the realm of the dead for a multitude of reasons. The most common visits to the underworld involve persons who pass over into the world of the spirits and are able later to revive and tell their friends and family what they found there. These fortunate humans are often able to return to the world of the living due to bureaucratic mistakes in the underworld, or by bribing a corrupt underworld official. Occasionally, humans who enter into the territory of the dead are at the mercy of spirits who use their supernatural powers to bewitch and entrap. According to Anthony Yu, the subject of most ghost stories is a failure or breach of ritual:

Within the fictional context the meaning of rite is consonant with the traditional understanding of li in Chinese culture, encompassing both the specifics of ritual (e.g., the corpse is buried upside-down and the situation must be rectified) and the fulfillment of socio-ethical norms (e.g., the requital of injustice or kindness). The “discomfort” suffered by the dead that instigates its arousal thus ranges from physical pain induced by an inverted burial or a tree-root invading the corpse to worry over a son’s due inheritance and indignation at a poet’s careless encomium to feminine virtue.

The belief that ghosts can suffer as much as the living and even feel discomfort leads to the supposition that there is little difference between the world of the living and the world of the

Yu, “Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit!,” 433.
dead. Yu writes that this similarity between the world of the dead and the living is the most "pronounced and persistent one of the [zhiguai] genre." He continues,

The concerns and preoccupations of the living are seen clearly to extend beyond the grave. Even the rhythm of life – punctuated as it is by birth, growth, marriage, and death–and the provision for its material and spiritual well-being (food, rainment, lodging) obtain as stubbornly in the world beyond as they do in the present one.91

The notion that men and spirits have similar concerns regarding the fulfillment of various needs, both physical and emotional, undoubtedly ties the two worlds closer together.

When a ghost appeals to a human for help, the human may provide assistance out of a feeling of empathy. An example of a ghost story that demonstrates this type of moral reciprocity is the story of Zhang Jiayu, prefect of Xiangzhou, who moves into a residence haunted by a poltergeist:

In the Kaiyuan period Zhang Jiayu became prefect of Xiangzhou. The prefectural residence had long been haunted, and when Jiayu first arrived ghosts at once began changing around his furniture and creating maximum disturbance. But Jiayu did not fear them. When the settings for a feast in a small hall in his west court were once again overturned, together with other foodstuffs, Jiayu went to investigate.

He saw a girl and asked her: 'What spirit are you, young lady?' She said: 'I am the daughter of my late father Yuzhi, once prefect of Xiangzhou and grand general of the Zhou dynasty. Our family has suffered a great wrong, and he wishes to meet the prefect and set forth his case.' Zhang said: 'I shall hear what

91 Yu, "Rest, Rest Perturbed Spirit," 433.
he has to say with due respect.' Before long the man appeared. In look and dress he was stately and grand, a gaze noble and sublime. He began by paying his respects to Zhang, who asked him to sit and asked him this: 'You, a man wise and good in life, an honoured spirit in death—why do you now speak and rustle among the shades, frightening the boys and girls and giving this prefecture the lasting repute of a haunted post?'

He replied: 'In days gone by, when the house of Zhou reached the end of the imperial sway, Yang Jian seized power. How could I, who had the honour to serve under the Zhou, endure the collapse of its state altars? It was for this that I wished to preserve my integrity as a subject, to take the lead in the great house. I aspired to restore the cosmos to rights and so maintain Emperor Taizi’s heritage. Wei Xiaoguan was once a minister of the Zhou house but he failed to respond to the call of the righteous enterprise. Instead he agreed to be harnessed and used by Yang Jian. I, with the forces of a single prefecture, faced the massed thousands of the entire empire’s armies. Even though my good faith reared up to high heaven itself, there was no one in the whole world to come to my aid. Upon which my territory fell to the enemy. My whole lineage was put to death, and the bones of my entire family, about sixty of them, lie beneath this hall. The more time goes by the more our sense of grievance rankles. Even if we would, we cannot rot away, but whenever we address ourselves to men we terrify them to earth. With no one to hear our complaint we have come to this. I beg you sir, to cast your eyes upon us. If our forgotten bones can gain your kind attention and our darkened souls be lifted up again, then even death will be to us as life itself.'

Zhang gave his consent. Some days later he had the piles of bones dug up
and gave them solemn burial at the rear of the hall. He then made the hall into a
temple and addressed prayers to the dead at the seasons of the year. 92

This story is a good example of a ghost story plot that commonly appears in
zhiguai. One of the most important elements of the ghost story is that ghosts, unlike
demons, have their own stories to tell. In the account above, Yuzhi spells out his grief to
a sympathetic Zhang and gives details of the events that led to his family’s slaughter.
Until the bones of his family are buried properly and have received proper rites, he has no
choice but to haunt the prefect. Zhang kindly complies with the ghost’s request and the
hauntings cease. The story shows the importance of mutual obligation across boundaries.

In contrast, the demon story rarely demonstrates any kind of social-moral
responsibility between demons and humans. Demons receive little, if any, empathy from
their human counterparts. They are generally nameless and their ties to the human world
are ambiguous. There are no reasons for their interference in human lives. Demons that
disrupt the harmonious balance of the cosmos deserve punishment and the virtuous have
it as their rightful duty to destroy them. J.J. M. de Groot explains,

> It is clear among men and spectres there may be such anti-natural actions which are sie or
> yin. They are all detrimental to the good of the world, destroy the prosperity and peace
> which are the highest good of man, and as a consequence, all good, beneficial
government; they may thus endanger the world and the Throne. If they proceed from
men, they ought to be combated by everybody, and eradicated; it is the natural duty of
right-minded orthodox rulers and statesmen to persecute such heresies, and even the
thoughts and sayings which produce them, the more so as they may be detrimental to

virtue and morality, without which humanity cannot possibly prosper, nor durably exist. And when such actions proceed from spirits, a defensive war should be waged against them by man, they should be combated, repulsed, driven away and exorcized, if possible annihilated, by artful expedients.93

The central focus of the demon story is not to placate the spirit, as in the ghost story, but to kill it or banish it through exorcism. Exorcism is one of the most important features of the demon story. The elements that make up the exorcist motif in zhiguai stories come from Chinese popular and religious beliefs about quelling demons. In all stories, the goal is the subjugation or destruction of the demon. An example drawn from the Taiping guangji demonstrates that demons can be killed through bravery, strength and even humor:

During the Dali period of the Tang dynasty [766-779], there was a scholar named Wei Pang who had enormous strength and was never afraid to walk alone at night. Wei Pang was skilled at riding horses and archery. He always carried bows and arrows with him while traveling. Not only did he hunt birds and animals to cook, but he also ate snakes, scorpions, earthworms, cockroaches and crickets on sight.

Walking one night while in the capital, the last drum had sounded and he was very far away from his landlord’s home. Wei Pang wanted to find another place to stay for the night but he didn’t know where to go. Suddenly, he saw that someone had just moved out of an official’s house and some young family members were about to lock the door. Wei Pang went to inquire whether he could lodge there for the evening. The owner answered, “Our neighbors are in mourning. According to an old saying, ‘To prevent death from entering the house, one must reduce the people and possessions [inside].’ I’ve

moved my family to a relatives house nearby for the night but will move back tomorrow. I must warn you of this situation.” Wei Pang said, “If you let me stay here for the night, what harm would that be? If there is a murderous demon, I will confront it myself!”

The owner led Wei Pang into the house, opened the hall and kitchen, and showed him the bed and quilts as well as the food that was there. Wei Pang asked the servants to tie his horse to the trough, light the lanterns and cook him a meal. After eating, Wei Pang ordered the servants to sleep in another room. He put his bed in the center of the hall and opened up both eaves of the door. He blew out the lantern, strung his bows, sat down and waited. Suddenly, when the third watch was almost over, there was a sphere of light like a large dish which flew down from the sky, and hovered around the northern door of the hall. It burned bright like fire. Wei Pang was excited and in the shadows pulled his bow taut, letting it go with full force. The arrow hit the ball of light, exploding it noisily. The fire wobbled. Wei Pang shot another three arrows in succession. The fire gradually weakened and at last was still. Bow in hand, Wei Pang went up to the sphere to pull out his arrows and the ball fell to the ground. Calling his servants to bring a torch, he saw it was a ball of flesh. The four sides of the flesh had eyes which opened several times, burning brightly. Wei Pang laughed and said, “My statement about killing a demon was not nonsense!” He asked the servants to cook the ball of flesh. The smell of the meat was delicious. When it was well-done, Wei Pang cut it into small strips, seasoned it and took a bite. It was exceptionally tasty. He gave some to the servants to eat and kept half for the owner of the house. The next day the owner returned and saw Wei Pang, happy that he was unharmed. Wei Pang told him the story of killing the demon and gave the owner the meat he had
The hero in this story not only kills the demon but eats it as well, showing his strength and superiority over the spirit-world. Even though the power of demons is immense, they can be killed. If they can die, the power they hold over humans is limited and therefore less frightening.

Despite their differences, ghost and demon stories share several very important features. They emphasize the fluidity of the boundaries that separate humans and the spirits. The constant trafficking between the realm of the living and the otherworld implies that the Chinese believed that humans are intertwined with all creatures, both in the material and spiritual world. These stories, though concerned with the supernatural, are all undeniably human-centred. They explore the relationships humans have with other beings and mankind's place in the cosmos. Tension arises from how the protagonist fares in the confrontation with the unknown.

2.3 Demonographies

Through exorcistic rites, talismans and other rituals, Chinese attempted to assert control over the things they feared most: death and the uncertainty of the world beyond. For ancient Chinese, all gui were thought to be capable of harm and considerable measures were taken to appease the benevolent spirits through sacrifice and to expel malevolent spirits through apotropaic rituals. Texts were compiled to help the user identify malicious spirits and control them through magic. Pre-Han and Han demon lore contains invaluable information on how early Chinese conceived the powers of supernatural forces, but most of what has been discovered is fragmentary. Until recently, there have been few extant ancient demonographies.

The Shanhaijing (Classic of mountains and seas) is one of the earliest texts to contain information on how Chinese conceived of the demon world. Dating from the Warring
States or Qin period, the text contains fragments of ancient myths, geographical information, and tales of neighbouring peoples often depicted in monstrous forms. The text is especially rich in its descriptions of demons and other inauspicious creatures. The Shanhaijing identifies unfamiliar flora and fauna, lists possible harmful influences and provides ritual prescriptions to keep them at bay. This text was an important precursor for the zhiguai genre, especially in regards to the demonic and sexual powers attributed to animals. Michel Strickmann writes, “Transformed animals—especially foxes, snakes, dogs and tigers—continued to provide an ever-present demonic threat in which sexual possession was a dominant theme.”95 We find similar beliefs recorded in zhiguai tales in which men and women become sexually involved with animals in human guise and discover only too late that they have been bewitched.

The discovery in 1976 of a third-century manuscript in Shuihudi, Hubei, China, has brought new insight to those hoping to reconstruct early attitudes towards the demonic.96 This manuscript contains information on Warring States and Qin-Han magico-religious practices. One section of its manuscript, titled jie, 诘 or “spellbinding,” lists seventy types of remedies for demonic interference.

Some of the techniques listed for warding off spirits include proper posture for cultivating qi and exercises for strengthening the body to resist demonic possession. Other methods include use of tools and weapons to repel evil beings. Exorcistic archery was an important method for fighting demons. One entry reads:

When a person is attacked for no reason by a demon, this is the Stabbing Demon (tz'u kuei 剣鬼). Make a bow from peach wood, arrows from jujube, and feather them with chicken feathers. Shoot it when it next appears and it will go away.97

95 Strickmann, Chinese Magical Medicine, 69.
One did not have to be good with a bow and arrow to tackle evil. The manuscript lists simpler measures such as throwing shoes, stones or even excrement:

The dwelling places of the great spirits cannot be passed through. They like to injure people. Make pellets from dog excrement and carry them when passing through. Throw them at the spirit when it appears, and it will not injure people. *98*

As Donald Harper notes, these rituals were not only for those practitioners of organized religions that claimed special knowledge of the underworld, but were meant for the layperson to use as needed. This sets the Shuihudi manuscript apart from other demonographies that were primarily used as manuals for religious practitioners or to refute the existence of the supernatural. Harper writes,

While the diffusion of such practices into the activities of daily life is fairly well documented for the Six Dynasties period and later, nearly all of the magical practices described in the Shui-hu-ti demonography are only attested in the context of formal religious rites in ancient sources. Thus the demonography permits us to set in focus a perviously hazy picture of the interrelations between religious and folkloristic traditions in Warring States and Ch’in-Han times. *99*

The Shuihudi manuscript offers itself as a guide to the layperson for everyday dealings with the demonic. It attempts to provide a comprehensive catalogue of the numerous denizens of the otherworld and provides remedies in case of spectral attack. Variants of the rituals and folk traditions found in the Shuihudi are also found in *zhiguai* demon stories, including the *Yijianzhi*, suggesting that demon stories have their foundation in early conceptions of the demonic.

2.4 Shapes of the Demon

Demonographic texts such as the Shuihudi attempted to categorize demons according to type, name and the magical means of controlling them. However, because of their shapeshifting nature, demons slip easily from one category to another, defying any superficially imposed boundaries. Because of the demon's intricate connection with a wide body of natural phenomena, it appears in innumerable forms, often deceiving the human it encounters. This makes the development of a concise taxonomic classification system almost futile.

Concern with knowing the names and class of demons pervaded much of early Buddhist, Daoist and popular texts. By knowing a demon's name, a person could rob it of power. Ge Hong (葛洪) in the fourth-century Bao puzi neipian (The inner chapters of the philosopher Bao Puzi) provided travelers with the names of mountain and forest demons as protection against trickery:

The mountain power in the form of a little boy hopping backward on one foot likes to come and harm people. If you hear a human voice at night in the mountains talking loud, its name is Ch'i. By knowing this name and shouting it, you will prevent it from harming you. Another name for it is Jo-nei; you may use both those names together. There is another mountain power, this one in the shape of a drum, colored red, and also with one foot. Its name is Hui. Still, another power has the shape of a human being nine feet tall, dressed in fur-lined clothes and wearing a large straw hat. Its name is Chin-lei. Another is like a dragon, variegated in color and with red horns, the name being Fei-fei. Whenever one of these appears, shout its name and it will not dare harm you.

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101 Translation by James R. Ware, Alchemy, Medicine & Religion in the China of A.D. 320: the Nei P'ien of Ko Hung (New York: Dover, 1966), 287.
Knowing a demon’s name was one way to neutralize it. According to Strickmann, the belief in the power of names was linked with cosmology. Chinese family names were classified as rhyming with one of five musical notes and the names and musical notes were linked with one of the five directions and its corresponding element (earth and wood, south and fire, west and metal, north and water, center and earth). “Knowing an invasive demon’s family name,” Strickmann writes, “the healer could turn the same system to his advantage by using it aggressively (as fire is overcome by water, so south is overcome by north).”

Xu Hualong, in Zhongguo gui wenhua 中國鬼文化 (Culture of Chinese ghosts), has provided a summary of gui that appear frequently in Chinese legend and folklore. Categories include demons that can be defined by their physical characteristics: pifa gui (disheveled-hair demons), pomian gui (broken-face demons), changmian gui (long-face demons), xiaomian gui (little-face demons), duzu gui (one-footed demons); demons that cause disease: nüe gui (malaria demons), wen gui (plague demons); and demons that can be classified according to their behaviour: yin gui (lascivious demons), and mu gui (children-eating demons). Xu’s categories of gui are extensive. I present here only a sampling of what he discusses. We find variations of these categories throughout the zhiguai tradition, including the Yijianzhi.

A more detailed overview of the broad range of Chinese demons can be found in de Groot’s Religious System of China. De Groot divides demons into six large categories, covering almost every type of naturalistic phenomenon. His categories include mountain and forest demons, water demons, ground demons, animal demons and plant demons. The most comprehensive category by far is that of the animal demon. De Groot includes in his examination

102 Strickmann, Chinese Magical Medicine, 31.
103 Xu Hualong, Zhongguo gui wenhua (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1991), 115-141.
many tales of demons that appear in the shape of tigers, wolves, dogs, foxes, reptiles, birds, fish and insects.\textsuperscript{104}

The shapeshifting animal demon is an important element of demon lore. Some of the most common are tales of animal demons in the guise of humans. In the \textit{Yijianzhi}, animal demons include turtles, tigers, snakes and foxes. Of these, two of the most common types are fox and snake demons.

Fox demons have long been a dominant demon type in Chinese literature. As embodiments of sexuality and lust, they appear in literature from the Six Dynasties through the Qing.\textsuperscript{105} Since ancient times, the Chinese blamed them for a multitude of catastrophes, including bewitchment, sickness and death. Fox spirits were both worshipped and exorcized by individuals and communities and the popularity of fox cult worship was widespread in northern China beginning in the Tang. The \textit{Yijianzhi} presents thirteen stories of fox demon encounters during the Song. In many, men and women fall under the spell of a fox disguised as a human. This plot is typified by the following story, “Sister Wang Qianyi” (\textit{Wang Qianyi jie} 王千一姐) from the \textit{Yijianzhi}:

In Qiaoshe town in Longxia county, there was a rich man named Zhou Sheng who was known for spending large amounts of money on wine and singing girls to entertain himself. During the six month of the fourth year of the Shaoxing era [1134], there was an old man who passed by on the road who called him himself Wang Qigong. With him was his daughter, named Sister Qianyi, who was to meet Zhou Sheng. Sister Qianyi was very pretty and good at playing the \textit{qin}, calligraphy, chess and painting plum

\textsuperscript{104} De Groot, \textit{The Religious System of China}, vol. 5.

\textsuperscript{105} The \textit{Taiping guangji} is a major source of fox stories. There are eighty-three stories in all, the majority dating from the Tang and Song. Modern scholarship on foxes include: Leo Tak-hung Chan, \textit{The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts}, Rania Huntington, “Foxes and Ming-Qing fiction” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1996); Li Shouju, \textit{Huxian xinyang yu huli jing gushi}, (Taipei: Xuesheng shushe, 1995), Kang Xiaofei, “Power on the Margins: The Cult of the Fox in Late Imperial China” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2000).
trees and bamboo. Zhou asked her to sing some lyrics and the lyrics matched the metre wonderfully well. Zhou was pleased with Sister Qianyi’s beauty and even more with her exceptional talents. He said to Wang, “I already have a wife but can you persuade your daughter to be my concubine?” Wang answered, “My daughter is twenty-two and she has no other relatives but myself. If you can take her and let her serve you, I will be very grateful.” Zhou thanked him for agreeing to his proposal and offered Wang one hundred official bills. Wang said, “I don’t really care about money. As long as my daughter has a place to go, I am satisfied.” Zhou asked the marriage broker to draw up a contract with Wang. Wang took the money, left his daughter with Zhou, and departed the next day.

The daughter became Zhou’s concubine for over a year. In the eighth month of the following year, a traveler dressed as a Daoist passed by and said, “It’s obvious your home manifests a strange aura! I will get rid of it for you!” The servants reported to Zhou, who came out and offered the Daoist some money, which he turned down. Zhou offered wine but the Daoist refused to drink. The Daoist asked him, “How many people are in your household? Whether old, young, man or woman, please gather them here. I want to see who has the best prospects.” Twenty-seven members of Zhou’s household gathered in the hall. The Daoist looked closely at one woman, stretched out his hand and began reciting a spell. He blew air on the woman and yelled, “Be gone!” Suddenly fire and thunder came out of his sleeves with a cracking sound. Smoke enveloped them, which soon cleared. Sister Qianyi had turned into a white-faced fox, fallen to the ground, dead. The Daoist was nowhere to be seen.

In this story, we see the “exorcist plot” that appears in many demon stories: a man falls

under the spell of a temptress and must rely on the help of a cleric to survive. The structural elements of the plot—sexual union with a demon, intervention by a religious specialist, and final exorcism—have provided the model for numerous tales of this kind. The goal of this type of story is always the destruction of the demon. This type of plot will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

A reversal of the *femme fatale* theme is seen in the *Yijianzhi* story “The Willow Tree’s Essence” (*Yangshu jing* 楊樹精) of a woman who becomes bewitched by two demons when her husband leaves on a trip. The demons show up at the wife’s home under the guise of two men, one fat and one thin. The wife lets them in and they share wine and food with her. Several days later they visit again, and then again. Eventually, they become intimate with her. Their sleeping arrangements prove to be problematic so they come up with a solution:

The two men conferred together, saying, “Both of us cannot sleep with the wife at the same time. It would be best to gamble—the loser must leave and the winner will stay the night.” From then on, the two men gambled every night for a winner and loser, taking turns on who would stay or go. The wife was greedy for money, wine and food and gave no thought to other things.

One night, when the wife is in bed with the thin man, her husband returns home. Hearing the husband’s arrival, the thin man flees but the husband chases him. The man runs into the trees and disappears. The husband returns home to question his wife about the matter but she says nothing. The husband consults a Daoist in the village who helps him locate the home of the demons. Originally, the thin man was a willow tree and the fat man a fox. When the tree is chopped down, the sap flows like blood. The fox burrow is also destroyed.107

This story, similar to the preceding examples, places emphasis on the intervention of a

107 *Yijianzhi, zhi sanbu* 志三补, 22.6.
Daoist to save the victim from bewitchment. The pairing of the fox and the willow tree demonstrates the intermingling of all creatures, be they demons or humans.

Along with foxes, snake demons are another of the large category of demon-types in zhiguai. Being a symbolic representation of sexuality and destruction, snakes universally repel and fascinate. In his study of the evolution of the White Snake myth in China, Wu Pei-yi writes that "The snake holds man in fascination on account of its numerous and often mutually contradictory attributes: its great variety in color and shape, its potentially immense size, its mysteriousness and elusiveness, its identification with mother earth, its supposed ability to cause rain and flood." An incarnation of evil in the West, the snake is associated with the temptation of Eve and the expulsion from the garden of Eden. In China, Nuwa is the creator goddess who is the embodiment of both sexuality and motherhood, and is represented as a snake. Many of the attributes of the snake in Chinese folklore can be taken as having derived from this early depiction.

The Taiping guangji has one hundred stories concerning snakes, more than for any other animal. Snake demons also play a dominant role in the Yijianzhi, appearing in the forms of children, young men and beautiful women. In "Zong Liben’s Child" (Zong Liben xiao 'er 宗立本小兒) a traveling merchant encounters a small child on the road. The merchant asks the child about his family and the child reveals that his parents are dead and his caretakers have abandoned him. Being childless, the merchant adopts the child as his own. The child proves to be exceptionally clever and the merchant takes him as a traveling companion, the child amusing people on the road for money. Two years later, he encounters a foreign monk on the road who questions him about the child.

109 Taiping guangji, 456-459.
[The monk] pointed to the child and asked, “Where did you find this child?” Zong stared at the monk and replied, “My wife gave birth to him. Why ask such inanities?” The monk laughed, “This is one of five hundred small snakes of mine from Wutaishan. I lost it three years ago and now I’ve found him. If you stay with it for too long, great harm will certainly come to you. I have already secretly practiced my art and immobilized it, and it has no power to wreak havoc.”

Then the monk demanded that water be brought and he sprayed it on the child. The child transformed into a red snake, wriggling about on the ground. The monk took a bottle, called upon the gods, and the snake immediately leapt into the bottle. The monk put on his bamboo hat and left without a word of farewell.

Stories of snake demons in China may have been influenced by the wealth of naga lore that entered China from India along with Buddhism. As Strickmann notes, stories of nagas developed from Indian myths centering around the hooded cobra, who were revered as the gods of springs:

The nagas exemplify the fusion of Indian figures with native Chinese personnel, since the word always used for the nagas in Chinese sources is lung (dragon). The entire gamut of ophidian forms and functions, from tiny snake to giant rain-dragon, and from the benign and godly to the demonic and virulent, is found in ritual texts as well as in legends and art.

Nagas were not the only demonic import from India. Yaksas are another group of demons that made their way into China from India. The Taiping guangji contains thirteen stories of yaksas and the Yijianzhi also contains several yaksa stories. In “Zhang’s Wife” (Zhang furen 張
夫人)，a man has a very beautiful wife who becomes ill. On her deathbed she insists that should her husband marry again after she dies, he won't miss her. When her husband swears an oath never to remarry on pain of castration in case he break his promise, she tells him that upon her death, she will transform into a frightening creature. Her advice to him is to put her corpse in an empty room for several days before encoffining it and not let anyone stand watch over it. After her death, her husband does not heed her caution and he has an old woman stand vigil over the corpse.

Around midnight, the wife’s corpse gave a long sigh, lifted the veil from her face, sat up, then suddenly stood upright. The old woman was extremely frightened and covered her head with the bedclothes. She sensed the corpse leaping about, secretly took a peek and saw a yaksa. Scared out of her wits and unable to move, she hollered for help. After poking a hole in the wall and seeing the yaksa, the family called for several soldiers on duty to bring weapons and circle the residence. The yaksa ran in one hundred circles then stopped and returned to the bedroom. It lifted the bedclothes, covered itself with them and lay down. After a while, the family dared to venture inside and take a look. What they discovered was the original body of the wife.

Three years later, the husband receives a promotion and a high official offers his daughter in marriage. The husband refuses but is later pressured into the marriage against his will. While taking a nap, his former wife appears and scolds him for marrying. Angrily, she threatens him with catastrophe. She pulls on his penis and from then on, it is as if he is castrated. Eventually, he meets with an unexpected disaster. 112

Female demons, such as the yaksa in this story, are commonly identified as sexually rapacious and a danger to the men who defy them. A wealth of demon stories center on the

112 Yijianzhi, jiazhi, 2:1.
female demon’s predatory nature. The myth of the treacherous female demon probably arose from the Chinese belief in the dangerous social powers of women and their abilities to subvert and possibly overthrow patriarchal systems of power. Women, according to Confucian moralists, had strong sexual appetites and were a hazard to unsuspecting men. A woman could destroy the harmony of her family by keeping her husband overly preoccupied with sex and away from his civil duties. Stories of sexually aggressive female demons serve to highlight the potentially destructive capabilities of women within the Confucian system. Jennifer Fyler writes,

The liaison in these tales is usually explicitly sexual. The demon entices the man to engage in sexual intercourse, seducing him away from his legitimate wife and family. In accordance with medical belief, this excessive sexual activity weakens the man, to the point of threatening his life. As he becomes weaker and weaker, the shapeshifter gains strength. Intervention by a member of the man’s community or family is generally necessary to help him identify the demon. Finally, she is forced to return to her true form, is recognized and banished to her marginal status on the borders of the community, where she continues to pose a constant and potent threat.113

The literary image of the female demon reflects the social tensions surrounding women in the Confucian family order. Though considered subordinate to her husband and family, a woman could bring destruction to her husband’s line of descendants through her reproductive powers, thus destroying the stability of the community and family.

In many cases, female demons represent women without male partners. They are in contrast to the “good” woman who is bound to a family and husband. A solitary woman is divorced from her safe domestic image and immediately evokes the sexual response of the man

who finds her aloneness both evocative and dangerous. Fyler comments,

Any beautiful woman is potentially dangerous. Whenever it is because of attraction that a man approaches a woman, he risks disruption of his family line. Such women are especially dangerous if they walk freely on the road. A patrilineal society depends partly on circumscribing women's freedom of movement, to eliminate any ambiguity in the parenting of male descendants. Women who walk alone are potentially outside the supervision of the community, and are an image of social chaos.\(^\text{114}\)

The female demons men encounter are alone and frequently appear vulnerable, claiming to be lost, confused or separated from their families by some misfortune. They appeal to men for assistance; unable to resist, the men fall into their traps, not realizing the danger until it is too late. Both feared and loved, the female demon represents all that is repressed and forbidden in society. The female demon story highlights the paranoiac fears that Chinese men held towards women and how the female was seen as a potentially destructive force within the family and community.

2.5 Conclusion

As we have seen, Chinese conceptions of the realm of the otherworld included a wide range of beings: ghosts, plants, animals and even inanimate objects. The word gui can be applied to both ghosts and demons and the ambiguity of this term reflects the elastic nature of the Chinese spirit world. While ghosts are often linked to a particular person, event or place, demons are more transitory and there is no justification for their return to the living. In a demon story, the emphasis is not on fulfilling the needs of the demon, as with a ghost, but instead focuses on the exorcism of the demon who must be removed to save the protagonist's life. Embedded within

\(^{114}\) Fyler, “Female Demons,” 265.
these stories are ancient beliefs, rituals and attitudes about the otherworld that carried over from earlier times and were modified according to the current social context. A close reading of a selection of demon stories in the *Yijianzhi*, all sharing the exorcist plot-type, will provide a window into common Song methods of dealing with the demonic.
Chapter Three
The Demon Stories of the *Yijianzhi*

3.1 Themes

The demon stories of the *Yijianzhi* consist of a series of accumulated thematic elements, built around the central theme of exorcism, in which a protagonist applies magical means to destroy a spectral assailant. They retain many of the same structural elements and motifs of earlier *zhiguai*. Valerie Hansen has commented that the “simple, sometimes monotonous, structure of the tales and their frequent repetition of the same themes testify persuasively to their origin as folktales.” 115 Patrick Hanan identifies several of these elements in his discussion of a strict “demon plot,” commonly found in the *Yijianzhi* and other *zhiguai* collections. When examining the plot structure of the demon story, he provides the following explanation:

The actors, in the order of their appearance, are a young man, unmarried; a demon, that is, an animal spirit or the ghost of a dead person, in the guise of a young girl; and an exorcist, usually a Taoist master. The four actions may be labeled Meeting, Lovemaking, Intimation of Danger and Intercession by the Exorcist. The young man goes out on a spring day to a resort on the outskirts of the city, meets a beautiful girl, and they make love. At length he realizes she is a threat to his life and calls in the help of a Taoist master who makes the girl return to her real form as ghost or animal spirit and punishes her. In the more complex plots, actions may be repeated several times, particularly the action of Intimation. The “revelation” procedure is in regular use, in which the truth is only gradually revealed to the reader as it is to the hapless young man. The stories are intended to induce suspense.116

Variations of Hanan’s plot (man meets beautiful woman, woman later revealed to be evil spirit, exorcism performed) exist throughout the zhiguai tradition. Stories often contain many of the themes that Hanan discusses, but may differ in order or complexity. Some themes have altered over time, while others are more stable or continuous. In the following stories we will see examples of common thematic elements and how they fit together to form a common demon plot-type.

3.2 The Stories

We see examples of Hanan’s demon plot in the Yijianzhi story “Young Mr. Wu” (*Wu xiao yuanwai* 吳小員外).”

Zhao Yingzhi and his younger brother Maozhi were relatives of the royal family of the Song Dynasty. While in the capital, they went out pleasure-seeking daily with the son of a wealthy family named Wu. One spring day they were at Jinming Pond when they discovered a small footpath leading to an inn. Enclosed in flowers and bamboo, with all the utensils displayed, it was quiet and elegant, very much to their liking. There were no people about, only a pretty young woman serving wine. The three men stopped to buy wine. Yingzhi pointed at the woman and said to Wu, “Why not invite her to join us?” Excited, Wu began to flirt with her and she accepted his invitation to sit with them. Just as she was to raise her cup, she caught sight of her parents returning home, and hastily stood up and left. The three men abruptly left. Soon, spring ended and they did not come to the inn again but admiring thoughts of the young woman appeared in their dreams.

*Yijianzhi, jiazhi*, 4:2. This is a modified translation from Ding Wangdao, *100 Chinese Myths and Fantasies* (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1988), 296-301. The vernacular parallel for “Mr. Wu” is “The Meeting at Jinming Pond” (*Jinming chi wu qing feng ai ai*) found in Feng Menglong’s *芙蓉樓 (1574-1646)*. Common Words (*Jing shi tongyan 聽世通言*). See Feng Menglong, *Jing shi tongyan*, (Nanjing: Jingsu guji chubanshe, 1991), chapter 30.
The next year, the three men returned to the place they had visited. When they reached the inn, it was desolate and forlorn and they did not see the young woman who had served them wine. They took a rest, bought some wine and asked the old couple in the inn, "Last year when we came here we saw a girl. Where is she now?" Frowning and looking sad, the old man and woman said, "She was our daughter. Last year we went to offer sacrifices to our ancestor's graves and she was left home all alone. Before we could return, she drank with three young scoundrels. We scolded her and told her that if she acted like this we would not be able to find her a suitable engagement. Deeply upset, she died a few days later. Near the house is a small grave which is hers." The three men didn't dare ask any more questions. They quickly finished their drinks and left, feeling sad and regretful. At twilight, close to home, they saw a woman coming towards them with her head covered. She said, "I am the girl you met last year at Jinming Pond. Mr. Wu, did you ever go to my home to visit me? My parents want you to lose hope in seeing me again and will tell you I died. They've even set up a false grave to fool you. I've been searching for you since last spring. It's so lucky that we met here. Now, I'm living in a remote lane in the city. The house is especially roomy and clean. Would you like to come with me?" Delighted at the invitation, the three men dismounted from their horses and went with her. In her house, they drank together and Wu stayed the night.

After being with the girl for three months, Wu grew pale and sickly. His father blamed the Zhao brothers, saying, "What places have you taken my son to? Now he's ill! I shall take legal action against you if anything happens to him!" The two brothers looked at each other and broke out in a cold sweat, having doubts about the girl. They heard that a Master Huangfu was skilled at exorcising demons. They went to him and asked him to examine Wu. As soon as Master Huangfu looked at Wu, he exclaimed,
“You are possessed by a spirit! You must go three hundred li westward to escape it. If the spirit remains present for more than 120 days, there will be no cure. You will die.” The three men immediately traveled west to Louyang, the western capital. However, every place they went to eat, the girl was there in the house; wherever they stayed the night, she was in the bed. By the time they arrived in Luoyang, 120 days had passed. The three men went to a restaurant to have their last meal, full of anxiety. Just then Master Huangfu passed by. They bowed to him, and pleaded for his assistance. He built a platform, where he performed certain rituals. Then, he gave a sword to Wu and said, “You are supposed to die today, but try this: go back to your room and shut the door tight. In the evening, strike whoever knocks at the door with this sword. Don’t ask who it is first. If you are lucky, you will kill the ghost and live. If you are unlucky, you will kill someone else and your own life will end. Although you may die, you must take the risk.” Wu followed his advice. That evening, the moment there was a knock on the door, he threw the sword at the person, who instantly collapsed to the ground. Wu saw in the candlelight that it was the girl, lying in blood. Wu was arrested along with the Zhao brothers and Master Huangfu. They were put in prison and tried. An official was sent to the girl’s home in the capital. “She’s dead,” her parents told him. The official opened the girl’s grave and discovered her clothing was like the sloughed skin of a snake. As a result, the four men were set free.

In “Mr. Wu,” Hanan’s demon plot can be broken down into eight essential themes: (1) journey: Wu sets out on a journey (with his companions); (2a) encounter: the demon Wu encounters is in disguise as a young woman so he fails to recognize her true form, (2b) reencounter: Wu reencounters the demon on the road; (3) sexual involvement: Wu and the
demon become sexually intimate; (4) illness: Wu exhibits symptoms of an illness of demonic origin; (5) helpers: intervention of companions who lead Wu to Master Huangfu (6) exorcist figure: Master Huangfu acknowledges presence of demon; offers advice to save Wu; (7) escape: Wu flees from the demon; (8) exorcism: the demon is destroyed through the use of a magic sword. These interconnected themes join to form a simple story pattern and can be used as a criteria for identifying other similarly themed stories in the Yijianzhi as well as providing a way to examine their latent meanings.

The most consistent theme, present in all demon stories, is that of the exorcism. In “Young Mr. Wu,” the plot centers on whether or not Wu will be able to escape from the clutches of the female demon. To do so, he requires the aid of an exorcist, Huangfu, who possesses the right tools and techniques to destroy noxious spirits.

The climax of the exorcism centers on whether or not Wu will actually succeed and kill the demon. Master Huangfu’s initial advice is to get as far away from the demon as possible. Needless to say, this advice proves futile as the demon has no trouble tracking the protagonist down. She locates Wu at an inn and Master Huangfu “coincidentally” reappears, and saves Wu’s life. After performing certain rituals, he gives Wu a demon-quelling sword, a common magic object used in both Daoist and Buddhist exorcistic rituals. With the gift of the sword, Wu has the power to kill the demon, thus eliminating its influence. It is significant that Wu himself must kill the demon, and not Master Huangfu, who is the one specially trained in the workings of the otherworld. The story demonstrates that even a layperson can possess the methods and means to control dangerous entities. When Wu hurls the sword at the demon, he shows a strength not demonstrated earlier in the story. Wu has transformed from an ineffectual, rather foppish young man to a brave, sword brandishing demon-killer. Courage and strength, as we see in the story, are two vital weapons in the battle against demons.
A story with a similar ending to “Mr. Wu” is “The Footless Woman” (Wuzu furen 無足婦人) in which a young man also falls under the spell of a demon, escapes and eventually has her killed by a sword with the help of a guardian deity.

Guan Zidong told about how his older brother, an erudite, when giving a speech in the capital, saw a woman begging in the market. Her clothes were ragged, her body filthy and she had no feet, so she used her hands to make her way along. However, she was beautiful and extremely seductive. There was a court official who saw her and was attracted to her. He stopped his horse and asked the woman, “Do you have any parents?” She answered, “No.” “Any relatives through marriage?” “No.” “Can you sew?” “I can sew very well.” The official then asked, “Rather than begging all by yourself wouldn’t it be better to be a man’s concubine?” The woman furrowed her brow and sighed. “With a body like this, I’m unable to look after myself. If I became someone’s servant and went into service, how could I get others to work for me and who would be willing to employ me?”

The official returned home and told this matter to his wife. His wife also felt pity and the official took the woman home. They bathed her and changed her clothing, arranged for food and drink and gave her needles and thread. She could sew very neatly and the household adored her. After a time, she and the official became intimate.

After about one year, the official went to visit Xiangguo temple and there he met a Daoist. Startled, the Daoist said to him, “The aura of bewitchment is very strong! What are you going to do?” The official thought the Daoist was trying to trick him; annoyed,
he didn’t answer. A few days passed and he again met up with the Daoist who
told him, “You are in great danger! Tell me the truth. I don’t want anything from you.
Does your house have some kind of ancient vessel, such as a tripod with a broken-foot?”
The official replied in the negative. The Daoist continued with his questions and the
official could not hide the truth. No sooner did he tell him about his concubine then the
Daoist said, “That’s it! That’s it! You must evade her! Tomorrow you should ride one
hundred miles away. Even if you’re unable to go that far, go as far as your strength will
take you and stop for the night. Make sure the door [to your room] is shut tight. At night
when you hear someone knock, don’t open the door, and perhaps you can avoid [harm].
Besides this, I have no other plans.”

The official began to be frightened. He didn’t consult with his family but
borrowed a strong horse and rode as far as he could. When it was dark, he stopped at an
inn. He hadn’t yet settled in when dust kicked up on the road, banners came advancing
along it and a powerful man on a black horse also stopped at the inn. The man made the
innkeeper a long bow and sat down. He pointed to the room directly across [from the
official’s] and occupied it, without exchanging a word with him. The official was even
more terrified and shut the door, not daring to sleep. Deep into the night, there was a call
outside his room. “Something tragic has happened in your family! They ordered me to
bring you word.” The lamp hadn’t yet dimmed and the official peeked through a small
crack and saw the footless woman. On her back were two fleshy green wings. The
official was so scared sweat poured from him like rain. Then, the strong man suddenly
unbolted his door and came out. Brandishing a sword, he struck at her. The woman gave
a long yell and fled.

The next morning, the official saw the man, bowed and thanked him, saying, “If it
wasn’t for you, I would have died I know not where. Do I dare ask you what your name is?” The man said, “Don’t you recognize me?” I was the Daoist at Xiangguo temple who warned you. I’m your guardian deity. Because you served me respectfully all your life, I came to protect you.” His words finished, he got on his horse and disappeared.

This story follows the familiar story-pattern found in “Mr. Wu.” We see a young man who becomes entranced by a female demon and must rely on an exorcist to remove her and save his life. The encounter with the demon does not take place in an isolated location, like at the inn in “Mr. Wu,” but in a marketplace, presumably teeming with human activity. The fact that the demon appears, not on the outskirts of a human community, but in the centre of it is a clear signal of danger. The story makes it obvious that demons, embodiments of societal tension and destruction, are everywhere and one must be prepared for them at anytime.

Like the female demon that appears in “Mr. Wu,” the demon here is also alone and appears as a marginal figure, a disfigured beggar. The protagonist finds her aloneness seductive and is immediately drawn to her. As with Wu, he initiates contact. After confirming that the woman has no family, he takes an additional step and actually invites her home to be his concubine. The demon enters his household, at his request, appearing outwardly domesticated and benign, showing no sign of her true demonic nature.

Time is an important element in this story. A year passes before the protagonist discovers that his life may be in danger. Up to this point, there has been no mention in the story of the protagonist suffering from any type of demon-related illness. The protagonist here does not show any awareness of the danger of his situation. It is not until he meets the Daoist in the temple, who identifies the presence of a demonic-like force, that he realizes what might happen to him.
Here we find some close similarities to "Mr. Wu." First, the Daoist "senses" the presence of a demon, reveals its identity, and then offers his advice: escape a considerable distance (one hundred miles). As in "Mr. Wu," this advice proves useless. The demon is deeply attached to the protagonist and refuses to leave. Nevertheless, the protagonist, like his fellow victim Wu, follows the Daoist's advice and flees.

The chain of events leading up to the exorcism by the Daoist is intended to create suspense. The protagonist lacks the companionship or guidance of helpers like the Zhao brothers, and must make his escape alone. After traveling one hundred miles on horseback and eventually stopping to rest at an inn, his ordeal is only beginning. The arrival of the man on a black horse increases the suspense and creates a mystery that remains unsolved until the end. Unlike Wu, the protagonist lacks the aid of any magic weapon and waits in his room for an almost certain death. When the demon arrives and the protagonist spies her monstrous shape through a crack in the door, his worst fears are confirmed. The protagonist is completely helpless in the face of the demon.

If it were not for the reappearance of the man who had arrived earlier on horseback, the protagonist would surely die. The exorcistic method is simple: the man stabs the demon with a sword and the demon runs away. Unlike "Mr. Wu," less emphasis is placed on the exorcism here than on the mysterious nature of the man who saves the protagonist's life. The revelation of the man as the guardian deity of Xiangguo temple is typical of many Daoist and Buddhist influenced zhiguai. The story emphasizes that those who are faithful will receive favor from Heaven.

The characters of Master Huangfu in "Mr. Wu" and the Daoist in "The Footless Woman" are representative of Song religious "experts" that lay persons and elite turned to for help in times of crisis. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries people had a bewildering assortment
of choices to make among religious specialists due to the changing socio-political structure.\(^{120}\) Beginning with the tenth century, Buddhist and Daoist monasteries had been regulated by the government and stricter standards were imposed upon those who wished to become ordained. To obtain an ordination certificate, a prospective monk would have to pass several examinations. This practice was eventually dropped in the Southern Song. Instead, the government asked those who wished to be officially recognized as Buddhist or Daoist to buy their certificate at an exorbitant cost. Of course, this was an impossibility for many, thus resulting in large numbers of hopeful monks becoming lay practitioners if they could not find a rich sponsor to buy a certificate for them.

At the end of the Northern Song, Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100-1125) gave strong imperial support to Daoism, building temples and offering generous support for Daoist festivals and rites. One of the most important changes that occurred to Daoism at this time was the shift from the practice of outer alchemy (\textit{waidan} 外丹) to that of inner alchemy (\textit{neidan} 内丹). While outer alchemy sought to transform a person through the use of elixirs containing herbs and minerals, inner alchemy focused on meditation, breathing techniques and exercises to purify and strengthen the body. The popularity of inner alchemy promoted new healing rites, including Daoist Thunder Magic (\textit{leifa} 雷法), in which practitioners attempted to harness the power of thunder to summon soldier gods and destroy demonic forces.\(^{121}\)

Because of changes in imperial support of religion and ordainment procedures for Buddhists and Daoists, large numbers of uneducated, nongovernment recognized practitioners roamed the cities and villages offering their help to those suffering from drought, illness or attacks from demons and ghosts. Despite their unofficial status, however, they still affiliated.

\(^{120}\) Hansen, \textit{Changing Gods}, 29.
\(^{121}\) Hansen, \textit{Changing Gods}, 43.
themselves with one particular tradition. A Daoist could not perform a Buddhist ritual and vice versa. These "religious experts" were in contrast to those lay practitioners, however, including shamans, healers, and fortunetellers, who called on gods and spirits of their choice from the varied popular pantheon. A lay person could choose from any one of these specialists to deal with problems.

The Yijianzhi provides numerous examples of the eclectic choices available to the public. Hansen refers to the story of a certain Monk Zhang, an unordained Buddhist monk, who after receiving a vision from a mountain goddess, goes to Fuzhou where there is a drought and tells the villagers to pray to him for rain. He promises the people that if there is no rain, they can burn his body. Luckily for him, it began to rain and the people let him go.122 Hansen writes that though Monk Zhang was not an ordained Buddhist, he identified himself as one and worked within the parameters of the Buddhist tradition. She writes,

Buddhist and Daoist practitioners had to work within whichever tradition they identified as their own. If, after the people of Fuzhou had finished piling the wood, they had set both the pyre and Monk Zhang on fire in order to bring rain, Monk Zhang could not suddenly have announced he was going to perform a Daoist thunder rite. Switching religious affiliations would have been tantamount to admitting he was a fraud. But, if the local people had lit the funeral pyre and Monk Zhang had burnt up, but rain still did not come, they could have consulted a Daoist practitioner, summoned a spirit-medium, or prayed to a dragon god."123

Stories such as Monk Zhang's give us an idea of the types of specialists that Song people turned to in times of distress. Edward Davis has explained that the Song was a time of

122 Hansen cites Yijianzhi, jiazhi, 9:9 as the source for this story, which is incorrect. I am unable to identify the correct reference.
123 Hansen, Changing Gods, 45.
increasing interaction among the existing religions of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism and that these systems shared a relationship that was both “symbiotic and antagonistic.” The three religions, as well as various forms of popular worship, all existed in a loose hierarchy:

At the top we find a group broadly defined to include the emperor, the court, and the bureaucratic and religious hierarchies (civil and military officials and their families, Daoist priests, and Buddhist monks); at the bottom are village spirit-mediums and Buddhist acolytes, local landowners (large and small), tenants and servants, and sub-bureaucratic servicemen and functionaries. In the middle I place a new and expanding group of lay Daoist exorcists called “Ritual Masters” (fashi), Esoteric Buddhist monks, doctors, ritual experts and religious specialists (shushi, xiangshi, daoren, etc.), and those who passed one or more of the examinations but were without official posts (shiren). Davis makes it clear that following a particular religion was not indicative of social status. For example, Confucianism was not necessarily associated with officialdom and Daoists often held official posts within the imperial house. Davis continues,

To take just one example, bureaucratic officials and Daoist priests belonged to the same social milieu in the Song. To be a Daoist priest (daoshi) was, above all, to be a literatus (shi) trained in the classical language and to hold an “office”—that is, to be an administrator of the divine world who dealt with that world by bureaucratic procedure and endless paperwork.

Though Buddhists and Daoists practiced the rituals associated with their respective traditions, there were religious specialists who straddled the boundaries between secular and popular ritual. Fashi, for example, borrowed elements of possession rituals from spirit mediums

124 Davis, Society and the Supernatural, 8.
125 Davis, Society and the Supernatural, 7.
126 Davis, Society and the Supernatural, 8.
as well as aspects of Daoist rituals and meditation to perform their services. Sometimes they worked as assistants to Daoist priests, sometimes with spirit-mediums. The functions they played in the community, often roaming from village to village to offer their services, were diverse.\textsuperscript{127}

Some \textit{fashi} found their clientele among the Song elite, in fact, some members of the elite were \textit{fashi} themselves. In the \textit{Yijianzhi}, Hong Mai records several stories of one practitioner, a certain Wang Wenqing 王文卿, a lay exorcist who began his “career” traveling along the coast of China selling his services as a physiognomist and as a master of Thunder Magic. He eventually ended up in the Song imperial house in Kaifeng and contributed several important texts to the Daoist canon.\textsuperscript{128} One story, “The Strange Woman from the Capital” (\textit{Jingshi yi furen} 京師異婦人) tells of his incarceration after helping a man expel an evil spirit in the guise of a woman.\textsuperscript{129}

During the Xuanhe period of the Northern Song [1119-1123], a scholar in the capital went out for a stroll on the evening of the Lantern Festival. Arriving at the Meimei Mansions, the numerous people looking at the lanterns blocked his steps and he was unable to move forward. Stopping, he saw a beautiful woman who looked lost and confused. When he asked her what was wrong, she said to him, “I was looking at the lanterns with some others but the crowds were too much. I lost my companions and now I don’t know how to return.” He seduced her with his words. Pleased, she continued, “If I wait here any longer, I’ll be abducted by someone. In this case, I might as well go home with you.”

The scholar was delighted and hand in hand they went back together. [Their

\textsuperscript{127} See Davis, chapter 3 “Therapeutic Movements” for an in-depth discussion of \textit{fashi}. \\
\textsuperscript{128} Davis, \textit{Society and the Supernatural}, 54. \\
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Yijianzhi}, jiazhi, 8.4.
affair went on for six months and the scholar favored her greatly. Not a soul bothered to track her down. One day, the scholar invited a good friend to drink with him and asked the lady to serve wine, which she did very cordially. A few days later, the friend returned and asked, "Where did you obtain that woman from the other evening?" The scholar replied, "I purchased her with gold." The friend said, "This can't be so! Tell me the truth. The other night when we were drinking, I saw that every time she passed behind the candle, her face changed. I don't think she's human. You must investigate." The scholar responded, "We've been together for months! It is nothing like what you say!" His friend was still unable to convince the scholar, so he said, "Master Wang Wenqing of Baozhen Palace is skilled in the art of talismans. Let me try and introduce you to him. If there is a demon, he will certainly be able to say. If this is not the case, then there is no harm."

The two friends went to see Master Wang. Master Wang took one look at the scholar and in an alarmed voice exclaimed, "The aura of bewitchment is very heavy! There is no cure! This demon is unique, no ordinary one compares." One by one, Wang pointed at his other seated guests and said, "Later you will all be my witnesses." Those who were seated were all frightened. Having heard [this] from his friends already, the scholar didn't dare hide the truth again. He told Master Wang the situation who asked, "[The woman] has what peculiarities?" The scholar told him that she always wore a very finely embroidered purse at her waist that she showed to no one. Master Wang wrote in red two talismans and gave them to the scholar saying, "When you return home, wait for her to sleep. Place one on her head and put one in her purse."

When the scholar returned home, the lady scolded him, "I have devoted myself to you for a long time! You doubt what you see and ask that Daoist to write charms,
and treat me like a demon! Why?” At first, the scholar made excuses to cover up but the lady said, “Your servant told me. One charm is to be put on my head, the other in my purse. Why are you telling me lies?” The scholar was unable to argue with her. He secretly asked the servant who didn’t say a word throughout the whole process [of being interrogated]. The scholar began to harbor doubts [towards the lady]. Come nightfall, he waited for her to fall asleep, but the lady occupied herself with sewing by lamplight and as the day was about to dawn, still hadn’t rested.

The scholar was even more disconcerted and paid another call on Master Wang. Pleased, Wang told him, “She can only stay up for one night. Tonight she must sleep, so follow my instructions.”

That night, as expected, the lady slept deeply. The scholar did as instructed and placed the talismans on her head and in her purse. The next day, the lady was not to be seen. He thought that she had already left. Two days passed and a jailer from Kaifeng prison arrested Master Wang and put him in jail. The messenger explained, “A lady of a certain family was seriously ill for three years. When her illness reached the critical point, she suddenly shouted, ‘Master Wang is killing me!’ Then she died. Her family washed her body and found the talismans on her head and in her purse. Then they went to court to file a complaint, saying Master Wang had used sorcery to kill their daughter.”

Master Wang, having explained the events, sought out the scholar and guests who had been seated that day to act as witnesses and only when the accounts all agreed, was he set free. Wang was from Jianchang [present-day Jiangxi].

We can see from the ending of this story that regardless of Wang’s affiliation with the
imperial house, he was not exempt from the accusations of fraud that certainly must have plagued many specialists in the esoteric arts. Regardless of skepticism, however, many fashi such as Wang managed to create successful careers by utilizing the popular rituals of their day to exorcize demons, alleviate drought, and call on helpful spirits.

In “The Strange Woman from the Capital” many of the elements of the previous two stories, “Mr. Wu,” and “The Footless Woman,” are repeated. The story begins with a scholar in the capital who encounters a female demon in the street who appears helpless and vulnerable. As with “Mr. Wu,” and “The Footless Woman,” the woman here is alone, having lost her companions somewhere along the way. The scholar initiates the first contact with her, thus leading to a predictable chain of events. The woman goes home with him and their affair continues over a period of time, the scholar gradually falling under her spell. The helper figure, the friend, witnesses the true form of the demon before the scholar does and attempts to warn him of the danger he is in. There is an effective use of foreshadowing in this story that occurs in two places: the friend’s recognition of the “inhumanness” of the demon when he sees her face pass through the light, and Master Wang’s prediction that “you will all be my witnesses,” when he points at the group of seated visitors. Both moments are examples of skilled storytelling, generating a feeling of tension that carries on throughout the rest of the story.

Master Wang provides the necessary exorcistic objects to help the scholar get rid of the demon: one talisman to place on the demon’s head and one to place in her secret waist pouch. In Chinese tradition, talismans or fu 行 were the most common means for getting rid of demons. Talismans existed for everything imaginable: healing the sick, childbearing, longevity, wealth, and protection from demons. Talismans could be any object, stone, clay or paper, engraved or written upon with figures containing magic powers. According to custom, the writing used in
these talismans was a special language, an archaic script only a select few could understand, namely priests, officials and scholars who had privileged access to the otherworld. Written on the talismans were orders for the demon to leave. The potency of the talisman derived from the spiritual strength of the exorcist who created it. Strickmann writes,

> The power of the implement is wholly related to the power of the officiating monk or priest—his control of the vital breaths within and his mastery of complex techniques of visualization. The seal is thus a concentrated tool of his own highly trained and heavily charged body. Its potency not only derives from the noble lineage to which the officiate belongs by virtue of his formal initiation but also draws strength directly from those supramundane powers for which his body serves as a conduit or receiver.  

In this story, the talismans are written in vermilion (cinnabar) ink on paper. When the demon comes into physical contact with the talismans, it is the equivalent of having bodily contact with the Daoist and his spiritual strength. The touch of a person who embodied the strength of the Dao had the power to drive demons back to the depths of the otherworld. At first, the demon in the story attempts to thwart the scholar’s plan to kill her when she learns about his meeting with the Daoist. She refuses to sleep that evening and the scholar is forced to hurry back to the Daoist the next day asking for advice. The next night, however, the demon sleeps, and the scholar places the talismans on her forehead and in her purse, causing her to disappear.

Another story recorded in the *Yijianzhi*, “The Old Post-Station of Dayi” (*Dayi guji* 大儀古驛), contains references to *Tianxin zhengfa* (Rites of the Celestial Heart), a popular demon-expelling ritual during the Song.  

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131 *Yijianzhi*, bingzhi, 7:1.
Jiang Di, a Right Palace Attendant from Xinxi district in Caizhou, was sent to Dayi garrison in Tianchang District to perform an inspection. The military outpost was sixty li from the district seat and one time, when Jiang was hastily returning from town, it began to rain. He decided to rest at an old post-station next to the road, and sent his attendants to prepare food. Jiang drank too much wine and went to the toilet. He saw a woman with a tall topknot dressed in a long gown, fashioned in the style of the Tang dynasty, holding a red handled halberd. She came directly towards Jiang to stab him. He used all his strength to resist her and at the same time yelled loudly. His attendants gathered one by one and only then did the woman leave. [Jiang and his attendants] searched the station but the woman was nowhere to be seen. That night they weren’t able to travel, so they went to a small room in the chamber on the west side of the main hall. Jiang ordered several soldiers to guard the gate.

Jiang was about to go to bed, but the woman was already there. She said to him, “A little while ago, I was just playing a joke. Why all this now?” She pulled him to the pillow and Jiang could not help sleeping with her. He asked her name but she did not answer. Before daybreak, she pressed him to go and when Jiang set out, the woman, holding her halberd, led the way. When they arrived at the military post, she left. From then on, every time Jiang went to the post-station, she invariable appeared and they slept together.

Whenever Jiang left, the woman would lead him to the outside of the city gates, then would return and also escort him back and yet no one among his attendants saw anything. Jiang was enamored of the woman and would take leave from work and make a trip to the post-station every ten days or so. His colleagues suspected something strange was happening and Jiang did not hide anything from them.
One night just as he had gone to sleep, two little hands clutched his neck very tightly. Jiang yelled in fright and those outside came to see what the matter was but the hands had disappeared. He had the mosquito net removed and candles lit and surrounded himself with servants. After a while, all fell deeply asleep, the candles burnt down and the woman came back. She said to him, “Earlier, that was my sister playing a joke on you!” Then, there was another young woman, very pretty, who got into his bed to sleep. The next morning, Jiang returned to the military post and the two women, both carrying halberds, led the way. This went on for over a year and Jiang’s energy wasted away and he was gradually unable to eat. It so happened that he ran into the Palace Servitor Sun Gu, come to assist the Tianchang tax official. Sun Gu had once received the [teachings] of the Pure Seal and was a master of the Rites of the Celestial Heart. Jiang’s family asked Sun Gu to come and cure him. Sun Gu initiated the Rite of Interrogation, wearing a magic talisman at his waist.

The next morning, Jiang went out and the two women holding the halberds were not there. But, after thirty or forty steps, they appeared to him on the roadside. The older woman was in a rage, “My sister and I have not betrayed you! How could we have the heart to hurt you, causing you to use these methods to send us away?” Her face colored in anger. The younger sister next to her advised her older sister, “This person has no feelings. It’s as if he’s wood or stone. Our partings and meetings are determined by fate. Why should we get upset over this?” Then the two sisters disappeared in a blink of an eye. Sun Gu cautioned Jiang, “Do not pass again by this post-station for one hundred days.” Because of Jiang’s illness, he was released from his position and returned home. He was very ill for several months but at last recovered.
The demons Jiang encounters in this story are much more sexually and physically aggressive than in the previous stories. The first demon attempts to stab him with a halberd only to show up in his bed a few hours later. Despite her attempt on his life, Jiang does not refuse her sexual advances, nor does he later refuse her sister even after she initially tries to choke him.

Like "Mr. Wu," and "The Footless Woman," a year passes before the effects of his involvement with the demons begins to take a toll on his health. Jiang falls ill, as expected, and his family summons the Palace Servitor Sun Gu, a master of Tianxin zhengfa, to help.

Tianxin zhengfa, attributed to the tenth century Daoist priest Tan Zixiaoz, from Fujian, was one of the most widely used rituals in the twelfth century. Tianxin used three talismans as its central focus: the talisman of the Black Killer (Heisha fu 黑殺符), the talisman of the Three Luminosities (Sanguang fu 三光符), and the talisman of the Celestial Outline (Tiāngāng fu 天罡符). These talismans were supposedly transmitted to Tan from the late Han founder of religious Daoism, Zhang Daoling 張道靈. These talismans, as well as their corresponding exorcistic rituals, embodied the power of three spirit-generals, Heisha, Xuanwu, and Tiangang, emissaries of the Emperor of the North (Beidi 北帝), the overseer of the underworld. An exorcist who employed the rites of Tianxin invoked the powers of these deities to banish the unruly spirit to the otherworld. Supposedly, Daoist practitioners claimed, the use of rituals such as Tianxin were a return to the ways of earlier Daoist practice in which talismans were central to their teachings.132

To exorcize the demons, Sun Gu performs the Rite of Interrogation, kaozhao 考召, a ritual that developed out of Tantric Buddhism and was later incorporated into Daoist ritual. The premise behind this therapeutic ritual was to enable the victim to identify the possessing demon

and thus expel it.

In a kaozhao ritual, the exorcist first transforms himself into a deity through visualization and then commands lesser-ranked deities to bring the offending demon to him, enclosed in some type of bound space: a mirror, a gourd, or a basin of water. The patient is asked to identify the demon in the object. By naming the demon, the victim associates himself with the illness-causing demon. Davis writes, “It will be the function of the patient’s possession to allow him or her to select a specific being with a particular name and history—to invest, in other words, these public, cultural symbols with personal meaning and to manipulate them to express his or her psychological needs.” After the patient identifies the demon, the demon is seized and forced to repossess the victim. Once the demon has been reintroduced to the patient, the exorcist asks a series of questions, trying to get the demon to identify itself and vacate the body, facilitating a “cure.”

In the story, after Sun Gu performs the Rite of Interrogation, the demons do not immediately disappear. Instead, they confront Jiang on the road the next day and admonish him for trying to exorcize them. Their indignation is similar to the anger expressed by the demon in “The Strange Woman from the Capital” upon learning that her human lover has become cognizant of her true nature. Reproach is followed by mock bewilderment over why they are being banished. Luckily for the humans, the power of the talismans is potent enough to send the demons back to the otherworld.

In “The Old Post-Station of Dayi,” the Rite of Interrogation was successfully used to expel the two demons. We find variations of this rite throughout the demon stories in the Yijianzhi. The following story, “Zhou’s Daughter Buys Flowers” (Zhou nu mai hua 周女買花), gives a more detailed look at the ways in which this rite was used to expel possessing demons.  

133 Davis, Society and the Supernatural, 98.  
134 Yijianzhi, zhiding, 8:8.  
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In Lin’an next to the Fengle bridge, a man named Zhou Wu opened a workshop. Zhou had a lovely daughter. One day, Zhou’s daughter heard outside the gate in the market the voice of a flower seller. She went outside to look and saw fresh flowers, beautiful, delicate and incomparable to the flowers she normally saw. She gave the flower seller a great deal of money, bought all the flowers and then planted them in the window boxes. She walked back and forth savoring their beauty, and couldn’t stop looking at them, even for a moment.

From this time on it was as if she was bewitched. She would sleep all day and not wake up. At night, she would sit until daybreak and forgot to sleep. Every evening, she bathed, made herself up and dressed, putting on new clothing. In the middle of the night muttering was heard, as if she was talking with someone. Her parents thought this was odd and they secretly invited a Daoist practitioner but the girl was completely unmoved, nor did she appear at all afraid.

There was an old physiognomist named Yu who lived outside Houchaomen gate. One day Zhou and Yu unexpectedly met. Yu asked Zhou, “I’ve heard that your household has a demon that you can’t expel. Is that true?” “Yes,” Zhou said, “I’m very worried but there is nothing I can do about it.” He then told the entire situation to Yu. “This is a cat demon,” Yu said. “Tomorrow morning I will certainly come and help you kill it.”

The next morning, Zhou prepared wine, meat, incense and paper money and
invited Yu over. Yu dispersed his qi and performed the steps of bugang. Soon, Zhou’s daughter shook and was afraid. Yu performed the ceremony and used a sword to swipe at her head. Without being conscious of what she was doing, the girl entered the house, slept soundly for a period of time, then got up, her spirits clear as before. Yu asked her what she had seen and she told him, “Just after dusk a young man with a distinguished appearance wearing a fur coat and riding a horse came. Two red candles were carried [by someone] in front. People playing reeds and flutes followed behind. When the man wanted to eat or drink, it was taken care of immediately. The man sang and laughed, just like anyone else. Now he’s gone.”

After some time had passed, Zhou’s daughter felt ill as if she was pregnant and Zhou again called Yu who wrote a talisman for her to swallow. After this everything was back to normal.

Despite the presence of a female protagonist, “Zhou’s Daughter Buys Flowers” shows a close similarity to the previous stories that I have discussed. Zhou’s daughter, like the men in the other stories, falls under the influence of a demon as the result of her own behaviour. Though her motives are innocent enough (buying flowers), her trip outdoors unaccompanied makes her vulnerable to the advances of a demon.

Soon after the purchase of the flowers, Zhou’s daughter begins to show signs that she has come into contact with a demon. Her sleeping patterns change and she talks to herself, sure signs that a demon is present. According to Chinese belief, someone possessed by a demon displays a

135 Bugang 步罡 ("Treading the outline of the stars"), a Daoist ritual in which the practitioner takes a symbolic walk through the stars in an effort to achieve mastery over them or draw energy from them into his own body. This was a common practice during the Tang and Song dynasties to expel demons. For more information on Daoist sky walking, see Edward H. Schafer, Pacing the Void: Tang Approaches to the Stars (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 234-269.
variety of psychosomatic symptoms. The human may lose consciousness, be angry one minute and joyful the next, sing, hum or screech, talk to invisible persons and refuse to eat or drink. Those humans who engage in sexual intercourse with a demonic being also display recognizable symptoms such as muttering, laughing, or showing signs of depression or delirium.\textsuperscript{136}

In this story, members of the Zhou family intervene and try and find an appropriate "expert" to help expel the demon that has taken hold of the young woman. The first "expert" is unable to alleviate the situation. An old physiognomist named Yu immediately identifies the afflicting demon, and offers to help. Skilled in a variety of exorcistic techniques, Yu is not identified with any particular religious group, though he performs rituals commonly linked to Daoist practitioners in the Song.

The exorcistic ritual is much more elaborate than in the previous stories. Calling upon the spirits for assistance, Yu strikes Zhou's daughter with a sword, yet she remains unharmed.\textsuperscript{137} The sword routine, associated with the Rite of Interrogation, was not intended to hurt the afflicted person but may have been to frighten the demon and force it to leave the body. Similar sword rituals are found in medical texts for treatment of demonic possession. Ge Hong writes in the \textit{Zhouhou beiijifang} 豬後備急方 (Prescriptions for emergencies after the pulse-taking),

Place the victim on the ground, and with a sharp sword draw a circle in the earth around his head, going to the left in the case of a man, the right in that of a woman [these are standard Chinese directional correspondences]. Then with the point of the sword make an inch-deep incision in the victim's nose. Quickly hold him fast so that he does not move. He will then speak in the voice of the possessing spirit and implore mercy. Ask him,

\textsuperscript{136} Strickmann, \textit{Magical Medicine}, 243.
\textsuperscript{137} Davis, noting the similar use of a sword in the tale "Xue Erniang 薛二娘" in the \textit{Taiping guangji}, suggests that the victim who undergoes such treatment may be in a trance-like state or the demon is the one being tortured, not the patient. See \textit{Taiping guangji}, 470. Davis, \textit{Society and the Supernatural}, 105.
\textsuperscript{10} Davis, \textit{Society and the Supernatural}, 98.
“Who are you?” “Why have you come?” [Having answered] he will beg you to let him depart. Then with your hand rub out the circle you have made about the victim’s head, a few inches above the shoulders, and let the demon go away. But you must not do so without having fully interrogated him.\textsuperscript{138}

Through interrogating the demon, an exorcist could seize an evil demon and extort a confession by torture. The interrogation can be seen as a kind of trial in which the exorcist attempts to try and sentence a demon and kill or expel it.

Zhou’s daughter is thought to be cured when she awakes from her trance-like state and is able to tell of her encounter with a young man in a fur coat, the cat demon. This cure is short-lived, however, and Yu must administer to the woman an ingestible talisman, to rid her of unwanted pregnancy. While the Rite of Interrogation was primarily a therapeutic ritual, the talisman that the woman must swallow is medicinal in nature and probably intended to induce abortion. We can see here the close connection between ritual practice and Chinese pharmacology, an area deserving more attention than this limited space will allow.

The foregoing examples of stories all depict ordinary human beings caught up in frightening events that grow beyond their control. Their interest lies in how they manage to overcome these supernatural obstacles and bring order back to their lives. The exorcist, negotiating the boundaries between this world and the next, acts as healer and destroyer. Versed in therapeutic ritual, the exorcist could expel demons and heal the sick. \textit{Qi} and \textit{jing}, identified with the demonic and part of the natural makeup of the human body, show that demon and man are intricately connected. The notion of the demonic, in fact, can be thought of as a projection of man’s inner state onto the natural world. Strickmann writes,

The old stereotyped notion of “nature spirits” or “animism” has little relevance here, for

\textsuperscript{138} Translated by Strickmann, \textit{Magical Medicine}, 239.
the Chinese terminology suggests instead that man is externalizing his own psycho-sexual processes and imprinting them upon nature. When ill and searching for causes, he takes cognizance of these projections (as if seeing his image in a cracked mirror) and reincorporates them, intellectually and spiritually in the form of shock, terror, disease and debility. Thanks to this accident of terminology, we are able to gain a remarkable intimation of a world inhabited by perilous beings personifying breath and semen-phantom panting, demonized gasps, spectral sighs, lurking halitosis, walking nightmares, marauding wet-dreams, galloping nocturnal emissions.139

The worldview of a Song person was shaped by the belief that demons were surrounding them at every turn and manifesting themselves through illness and disease. The exorcist was there to help victims identify the demons and challenge fears of death and illness.

3.3 Conclusion

From the stories examined, we see that a wealth of meanings hide beneath their apparently simple structure. The demon stories that Hong Mai gathered contain essential information on the various rituals and exorcistic practices that were popular during the Song. Though the stories appear on the surface to be incredible in content, careful study proves them to be rich in historical detail. Through their study we gain a clearer picture of how those of the Song perceived immediate threats to their well-being and how their perspectives were influenced by religious rituals that formed an important part of their everyday lives.

139 Strickmann, Magical Medicine, 73.
Chapter Four
Conclusion

An examination of two additional stories demonstrates the importance of the exorcism theme to the demon story from very early on. An example taken from the Zuozhuan is a precursor to the later demon story. The following account refers to the tenth year (580 B.C.) of Duke Cheng:

Duke Jing dreamt that he saw a huge ogre with disheveled hair hanging to the ground...screaming, “You killed my grandsons—you will suffer for your evil deed...” The ogre broke down the main gate of the palace, then the door of the inner apartments. the duke fled in terror to his chamber ...At this moment the duke awoke. He at once sent for the sorcerer of Mulberry Field. The sorcerer, without asking what had happened, described the duke’s dream exactly as it had occurred.

“What will become of me?” asked the duke.

“You will not live to eat the new grain!” replied the sorcerer.

Soon afterwards the duke fell ill. He sent for a doctor...named Huan to treat him. Before the physician arrived, the duke had a dream in which his illness appeared to him in the guise of two little boys. One boy said, “Huan is a skilled physician. I am afraid he will harm us. How can we escape?” The other boy replied,” If we go to the region above the diaphragm and below the heart, what can he do to us?”

As soon as the physician arrived he told the duke, “I can do no cure for your illness. It is located above the diaphragm and below the heart. No treatment can affect it there: acupuncture will not penetrate, and internal medicine is useless. There is nothing I can do.” [Nevertheless the Duke] entertained Huan.
On the day *bing-wu* of the sixth month, the duke decided he would like to taste the new grain... when his manservant had prepared the grain the duke summoned the sorcerer of Mulberry Field, pointed out the error of his prophecy, and had him executed. Then the duke started to eat the grain, but his stomach swelled up, and hurrying to the privy, he fell down the hole and died.\(^{140}\)

This story, though on the surface different from the other stories presented, contains elements of the exorcist plot-type previously discussed. The sorcerer, who is summoned to the duke’s bedside after the king experiences a nightmare, is able to recount the nature of the dream without being told the content first, thus demonstrating his efficacy with the paranormal. The dream is a prophetic one and the sorcerer predicts the death of the duke. The depiction of the sorcerer is very similar to the later exorcist figures who, in a similar fashion, predict the death of the protagonists who have come into contact with demons. These same elements show up in later *zhiguai* accounts but in a more elaborate form. “The Wife of a Clerk in the Board of Revenue,” (戶部令史妻 *hubu lingshi qi*) recorded in the *Guangyiji*, repeats the essential exorcism theme:

In the middle of the Tang Kaiyuan period, an official of the Ministry of Revenue had a beautiful wife who suffered from a malady caused by an evil spirit. No one knew what ailed her. The family horse, once fine and strong, was becoming thinner and weaker though he fed it with more and better fodder. He went to consult a foreigner in the neighborhood, a magician, who chuckled and said, “A horse gets tired after going for a hundred *li*. Your horse travels a thousand *li* a day. How could it not get thinner?” “But I never ride the horse and neither does anyone in my family,” the official responded. “How can this be so?” The foreigner explained, “Every night when you report for duty, your

wife goes out without you knowing it. If you don’t believe me, come home one night when you are on duty and see for yourself.”

The official took his advice. One evening, he returned home and hid himself in a certain place. At the first watch, he saw his wife rise from bed, attend to her toilette, and order her maid to saddle the horse. Then, by the front steps, she mounted the horse and gradually rose into the sky, followed by her maid, riding upon a broom. The official was greatly alarmed. The next morning he hurried to the foreigner and said anxiously, “It’s true, my wife is possessed. What can I do?” The foreigner advised him to spy on her the next night.

That evening the official returned home and hid himself behind a curtain in the hall. Soon after, his wife came into the room. She asked the maid why it smelt of a stranger in there. She ordered the maid to light the hall, everywhere, making use of her broom as a torch. In a panic, the official concealed himself inside a big urn in the hall. Soon after, the wife was ready to leave. Since her broom had been burnt, the maid had nothing she could ride upon. “You can ride on anything,” the wife told her. “Why do you need a broom?” The maid quickly mounted the urn and followed her. Inside the urn, the official was too terrified to move.

Shortly after, in a clearing on a mountain peak, they landed. A grand feast was underway in a tent. The wife joined in with a number of couples, drinking and chatting intimately with them. Several watches later, as they were about to depart, the wife mounted her horse and ordered the maid to ride the urn. The maid cried out, in surprise, “There’s someone in there!” Drunkenly, the wife ordered the maid to push the man down the mountain side. The maid, also drunk, dumped the man out. The official didn’t dare speak. Then the maid left, riding on the urn.
Waiting until dawn, the official found no one and nothing left, except smoldering cinders. He discovered a rugged trail along which he walked dozens of miles before he got off the mountain. After asking about this place, he told it was called Langzhou, a thousand miles or more from the capital.

After a difficult journey of over a month and of begging for food along the way, he arrived home. His distraught wife asked him where he had been for such a long time. The official made up some story and going forthwith to the foreigner, asked him to cast out the evil spirit. "Because the evil spirit is already present," the foreigner said, "we can snare it and burn it with fire when your wife leaves for the mountain." So, it transpired. They could hear a voice begging for mercy from the sky. Not long after, down from the sky, a grey crane came hurtling into the fire they had lit and burned to death. The official's wife recovered from her malady.\(^{141}\)

"The Wife of a Clerk" contains several characteristic elements of the exorcist plot-type: the strange behaviour of the wife, the consultation with the exorcist (in this case a foreign magician) and the final destruction of the demon. The story itself, though richer in complexity than the story recorded in the Zuozhuan, echoes the same insecurities about death and the unknown. The official, when faced with the possibility that his wife may be afflicted with an evil spirit, must rely on the powers of a skilled demon-queller to rectify the situation.

The repetition of the exorcism theme throughout Chinese literature indicates its high level of importance amongst early Chinese authors and compilers of demon lore. The theme is a defining element of the demon story and sets it apart from the more widely studied ghost story. Belief in demons dominated life and thought in premodern China and the concern with controlling the demonic is apparent when examining zhiguai collections such as the Yijianzhi.\(^{141}\)

\(^{141}\) Taiping guangji, 460. This is a modified translation from Ding Wangdao, 100 Chinese Myths and Fantasies, 286-288.
Demons appear in innumerable forms, as animals, plants or humans and can manifest as drought, famine or illness. They exercise a dominant influence over human fate and no one is safe from harm.

From early on, the Chinese observed a close connection between human nature and the monstrous. The phrase “anomalies arise from men” *yao you ren xing* 妖由人興, found in the *Zuozhuan*, illustrates that what the Chinese conceived of as demonic may have been a reflection of unresolved tensions within themselves and their society. Rania Huntington writes that the original story in which this phrase appears “puts the evolution of the tales of the strange in very sharp relief.” She explains,

... a battle of two snakes, one from within and one from outside the city, had been interpreted as an omen of the city’s conquest. When asked if they are really portents, Shen Xu responds, ‘When people have something they are deeply distressed about, their vital energy flames up and takes such shapes. Portents (*yao*) arise because of people. If people have no dissension, they will not arise of themselves. When men abandon their constant ways, then portents arise.’ 142

*Yao* in this story refer to omens that manifest under conflict and societal tension. In the later demon stories, the term *yao* is attributed to malignant entities that, as Huntington notes, “take conscious advantage of emotion upheaval, assuming the forms of desires or fears in order to dally with men.” 143 This statement is applicable to the demon stories that have been presented in this thesis, particularly in regards to the stories of female demons who take possession of unknowing men. These stories emphasize the dangers of female sexuality and the tensions regarding women’s roles in the Confucian family system.

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143 Huntington, “Foxes and Ming-Qing Fiction,” 289.
Hong Mai’s stories reflect the tumultuous time period in which he lived. The reports of
demon encounters that he collected from his sources give voice to problematic shifts in Song
society. The Jurchen invasion of northern China and the subsequent move of the capital from
Kaifeng to Hangzhou caused enormous disruption as people were forced to flee their homes and
move southwards. Changes in the social, religious and economic structure of the Song had a
profound effect on the daily lives of its citizens. Living in a time of uncertainty and upheaval
may have caused some to attribute the turmoil in their lives and society to demonic influence.

Hong Mai, following in the path of earlier zhiguai compilers, sought to record
information about the supernatural that he felt was of interest to his time, though he knew his
work was not considered important enough to be included in the official histories. Following in
the historiographical tradition, he records the date, place and names of persons involved in the
stories as well as identifying many of his informants. Hong Mai’s preference for the strange and
the sheer number of stories concerning gods, ghosts, demons, and visits to the underworld make
it difficult to consider these stories as pure historical fact. However, it is important not to project
modern day skepticism of the supernatural on the beliefs of a remote age. In one instance, Hong
Mai justifies his belief in the spirit world by quoting from Mozi (470-391 B.C.). Mozi is
repeatedly questioned by someone about the existence of ghosts. He responds:

    If from antiquity to today, from the beginning of mankind to the present, there
    have been people who have seen ghostlike and spirit-like beings and heard their voices,
    then how can we say they don’t exist? But if no one has seen or heard them, then how
    can we say they exist?  

Hong Mai’s citing of Mozi as well as his inclusion in the *Yijianzhi* of ghost and demon
encounters that happened to his own family and friends may give some indication of an interest

\[^{144}\textit{Yijianzhi, sanren} \text{preface.}\]
in the spirit world that went beyond a general interest in collecting strange tales. And as Hansen comments quite aptly, “The sheer length of the book belies his easy going attitude.”

*Zhiguai*, positioned between history and fiction, provide for us a window into the beliefs and values of early Chinese. Within the stories of the *Yijianzhi* are gleanings of information about the ways in which medieval Chinese men and women expressed concern over affairs occurring in their communities and society at large. Hong Mai’s stories are gathered from various levels of Song society and through them we learn of events and experiences unavailable in other forms of early literature. Drawing from a rich tradition of discourse about the strange and influenced by the prevailing religious traditions of the Song, the *Yijianzhi* proves to be invaluable for the study of medieval perceptions towards the spirit world.

This thesis has attempted to highlight the value of the demon story in the *Yijianzhi*. By focusing on one prevalent plot-type, I was able to enforce a type of structure on a very far-ranging topic of study. A more comprehensive examination of the demon story would look at several demon plot-types in the *Yijianzhi* and examine their importance within a wider body of folklore, bringing attention to thematic elements that not only occur in the Chinese tradition but in demonlore around the world. Regardless of the limitations of this study, this thesis has provided essential groundwork for further examination into the literature of the demonic. The significance of the demon story and its important place in the *Yijianzhi* is an area worthy of more serious investigation.

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Appendix
Selected Demon Stories

“Liu Zi’ang” (*Liu Zi’ang 劉子昂*)

During the thirty-second year of the Shaoxing period [1162], Liu Zi’ang was appointed prefect of Hezhou. This was just after a large catastrophe in the upper Huai River area so Liu took up the post alone. One day, he saw a lovely woman pass through the prefectural office. Bewitched, he called to her and they slept together. This relationship continued for several months. One time Liu went to the Tian Qing temple to pay his respects. There was an old Daoist priest who asked him, “You haven’t brought your family but your countenance is sallow and black, perhaps from the essence of a demon. What’s the matter?” At first, Liu did not want to answer but the Daoist persisted in his questions. Liu told him he had bought a concubine. The Daoist said, “[That concubine] is not human and you are unable to cure yourself. Now, take these two talismans and when night falls hang them outside the door. She won’t dare to enter.”

Liu took the talismans and returned home. It was not yet midnight when the woman arrived. In a rage, she said “We are like man and wife together! What is this business with the Daoist? I’m leaving immediately! Don’t think of me [again]!” Liu was unable to cut off his love for her so he destroyed the talismans. All along, Liu didn’t realize why the woman would be so afraid of the talismans and they became as intimate as before.

Many days passed and the Daoist entered the prefectural office to inquire about the situation. Seeing Liu, he said to him, startled, “Your life is finished! What is there to..."
do?! What is there to do?! Now, you must see [the demon]!” The Daoist sent orders to have ten pails of water cover the hall. The water covered an area of five to six feet in the corner which immediately dried up. Upon digging, they found a gigantic corpse in the earth without a coffin or shroud. The corpse was stiff but undamaged. Liu looked at the corpse and saw it was the woman he had been intimate with. Greatly sickened, in less then ten days he was dead.

“The Leprosy Demon of Yupi” (Yupi pi lai gui 鱼陂隸鬼) 148

[One time] my relative Hong Yang was returning home from Leping along with his two sedan bearers and one servant who carried the baggage. The sun had already set but they desired to get home that night. Twenty li south of Leping there was a place called Wukou market and another five li from there was a place called Yupiban. When they reached Yupiban, it was already the second watch and the moonlight was faint. They heard a loud sound in the mountains, gradually drawing closer, like the chopping down of several large trees. Yang thought it could be a tiger but a tiger’s roar wasn’t like [this sound]. In his heart he knew it was something strange. Yang hastily climbed down from the sedan and discussed with his servants about where to escape. It was already impossible to return to Wukou market. If they continued ahead, it was still very far to where people were. There weren’t places close by, they couldn’t retreat, thus, they had no plans for escape. They saw on the right side of the road a small dry ditch where they could hide. They hurried to get down in the ditch but the demon was already standing in front of them. Its body was thirty feet high and fiery from head to toe. The two sedan bearers almost died of shock. The servant carrying the baggage jumped into the sedan,
not daring to make a sound. Yang had with him the *Guanyin Dabei zhou* and he
nervously recited it over one hundred times. The demon stood, motionless. Yang’s
courage sunk but he didn’t stop reciting. The demon retreated a few steps, moved farther
away and then yelled, “I’m going!” From Yupiban it went one hundred *li* and entered the
home of a peasant family and wasn’t seen again. After Yang returned to home, he fell ill
and only after a year did he recover. The servant carrying the baggage came down with
the same illness as Yang and also recovered. The two sedan bearers died. Later, Yang
visited the peasant’s home and the whole family, five or six of them, had died of illness.
Yang knew that the strange creature was a leprosy demon.

“The Woman in White” (*Baiyifuren 白衣婦人*)

During the Xuanhe period of the Song Dynasty [1119-1125], Scholar Dong from
my hometown was at the Provincial Academy. One time he went to the toilet and saw a
woman dressed in white lingering in front of it. He asked the woman the reason for her
behaviour and she replied, “I am a worker from the vegetable plots and my husband has
already passed away. There is no one to depend on and I have nowhere to return.” Dong
stayed and talked with her and he told her where he lived. When evening arrived, she
came to him and they slept together.

Not long after, Dong fell ill. There were several people at his residence who were
aware of Dong’s situation. They went to Dong’s teacher to report the situation. When the
teacher arrived, he scolded, “This master has been bewitched by a demon! How could it
have come to this!” When he asked Dong what he possessed, Dong said, “The woman

\[149 \text{ The *Guanyin Dabei zhou* 觀音大悲咒} \text{ an Esoteric Buddhist text circulating during the Song.}\]

\[150 \text{ *Yijianzhi, bingzhi*, 11:7.}\]
has forgotten her gown.” He took it out to look at it and it was filthy and unhemmed. The teacher called for it to be burned and also appointed several students to go locate the woman’s whereabouts. An old peasant spoke up, “When I was a young shepherd tending sheep, there was a ewe that fell into the well and was never pulled up. Now this woman in white appears. Is this the ewe’s spirit?” The teacher called for a Daoist priest to perform rituals, read a spell and put black beans into the well. The demon never appeared and Dong died.

“The Woman of the Purple Bamboo Garden (Zizhuyuan nu 紫竹園女)” 151

In the second year of the Longxing era [1164], Zhang Yu was appointed Assistant Magistrate of Huaining prefecture in Shuzhou. At night, Zhang’s servant Gu Chao stayed in the study and saw a woman in a green gown who told him, “I was scolded and driven out by my mother and there is no place for me to return. I know you are staying alone so I have come to keep you company.” Gu asked where she lived and she said, “The purple bamboo garden in the southern part of the city.” The two then slept together.

After a few nights, Gu became dazed as if ill and he grew thin and lethargic. Zhang thought this was strange and asked Gu who told him the truth. Zhang said, “That woman is certainly a demon and she will harm you. Wait tonight for her to come here and then you should grab her and yell loudly. I will come and look.”

When the woman came that night, Gu grabbed her sleeve and yelled that the demon was there. The woman struggled, tore her sleeve and escaped. Gu lit the lamp and looked at it. Her sleeve was a banana leaf. The first thing [they found] outside the

151 Yijianzhi, bingzhi, 12: 2.
study was a purple bamboo garden and in the middle [of it] two very large banana trees that had caused mischief before. Zhang ordered the trees to be cut down and after doing this, the blood [from them] overflowed. He also had the bamboo chopped down and then he sent Gu home. From that point on, Gu was very despondent and finally he fell sick and died.

“*The Beautiful Woman of Nanling*” (*Nanling mei furen* 南陵美婦人)*\(^{152}\)

Xuanzhou of Nanling prefecture during the Han dynasty was called Chungu subprefecture. It was an ancient settlement. There was a man who opened a tavern inside the county gate. One time, the tavern keeper went out in the moonlight and encountered a beautiful woman. It seemed as if she had come from a house of importance and when she saw the tavern keeper she laughed and chatted with him. At that time, Guo Yaogao of Dongping was the District Magistrate and the tavern keeper thought that the woman was his concubine out for a stroll so he didn’t dare answer back. The woman went up to the tavern keeper and pulled him by the hand into the tavern. The tavern keeper was actually a low-class merchant and he was bewitched by the woman’s appearance. The woman stayed and they slept together. The next morning, she left but came back that night. This went on for several months. Every time the woman came, she gave him gifts. She started by giving him money and later gave him silver dishes. Gradually, the gifts grew in number and the tavernkeeper suspected that they may have been stolen, but he was greedy and didn’t worry about it.

One day he went to the countryside to sell some wine and ran into a Daoist who was begging for alms. The Daoist saw the tavern keeper’s pallor and haggard features

\(^{152}\) *Yijianzhi, zhiyi*, 8:5.
and said to him, “You suffer from an evil essence and are about to die by the hands of a
demon.” The tavern keeper was alarmed and didn’t hide the truth. He told the Daoist
the situation. The Daoist went to a nearby house and asked for three slips of paper on
which to write talismans for the tavern keeper to attach to the door of his home.

That night, the tavern keeper heard the woman scold, “I was sincere with you and
you received many things from me. I was planning on committing to you and you
suddenly act this thoughtlessly. How can you change like this in one day? I’m not afraid
of charms. I don’t want to enter [your home] because you are ungrateful and have turned
your back on me. I vow to have nothing more to do with you.” When she finished
speaking, she angrily left.

One night, a few days later, the woman came again and knocked on his door. She
said, “You are heartless, making things unbearable for people! Tomorrow night,
I’ll punish you!” Then, she left. After listening to this, the tavern keeper was terrified.
He sat up until daybreak and then relocated to another place. After his move, there was
no trace of the woman.

Three years later, the District Magistrate Xu Dalun’s wife, Miss Zhou, died.
Xu’s brother from Wuzhong came to mourn and stayed in a room behind the
magistrate’s office. At night, at the toilet, he was suddenly pushed to the ground, and
couldn’t stop drooling. A servant picked up the lamp and anxiously carried him back to
his room. After Xu saw him, he forced him to drink a drought of medicine and after some
time he awoke and said, “After going to the toilet, I saw a woman who led me to another
place where there were many luxurious beds. We drank and sang, and hadn’t yet been
intimate when I was woken up.” The prefect commissioner said that the magistrate’s
home often had demons who had caused trouble before. Therefore, the room was vacated
and he moved to the rooms on the west side. Xu Dalun’s style name was Zi Zhi and he was from Huzhou.