Who Are the Eight Kings in the *Samādhi-Sūtra of Liberation through Purification*?
Otherworld Bureaucrats in India and China

**INTRODUCTION**

The bureaucratization of the otherworld depicted in many early-medieval Chinese Buddhist scriptures has normally been considered as the product of sinification. Overwhelmed by the prevalence of the Chinese bureaucratic metaphor and Chinese religious ideas in these scriptures, previous scholarship has tended to stress Chinese influence in the process of textual formation, while the Indian elements have been relatively overlooked. In questioning this rather one-sided interpretation, my research has shown that it is equally important to study the Indian elements in hybrid scriptures of this type, particularly when we are investigating how texts were formed.

As an entry point to this question, we look at one of the earliest Chinese Buddhist scriptures of this type, the *Samādhi Sūtra of Liberation through Purification*, or, *Jingdu sanmei jing* (the title of its Chinese version, by which I refer to it in the present work). It has been studied by Japanese and Chinese scholars and has been considered as
one of the most important examples of early-medieval Chinese indigenous scriptures. What is of interest is that in various of its passages we get vivid descriptions of a Chinese bureaucratic metaphor of the otherworld administration, namely, the bureaucratic process that entails an inspection of people’s behaviour at a particular time – the Days of the Eight Kings. This mention of the Days of the Eight Kings leads to the hinge of our entry point: we must establish the latter’s deeper, non-Sinitic origins. By doing so, we gain the desired, fuller understanding of the Jingdu sanmei jing itself.

The first part of the present article will treat the history and structure of Jingdu sanmei jing. Then, it examines the hybrid nature of those passages that constitute our understanding of the Days of the Eight Kings – Dunhuang manuscript documents, a text in the received Buddhist canon, and manuscripts from Nanatsu-dera 七寺 (the name of a temple in Nagoya at which a discovery of Buddhist texts, previously believed to be lost, was made in 1990). Finally, the article shows how some elements of these accounts of the Days of the Eight Kings derived from India, and some from early-medieval Daoism.

THE COMPOSITION OF JINGDU SANMEI JING

Jingdu sanmei jing does not exist as a free-standing title in the Taishô canon of early Chinese Buddhist writings and is considered as anonymous. Moreover, because of its wide range of content and complex history, and it may be classified as a so-called reservoir text, that is, it contains a range of religious ideas from different sources, including Dharmapada 法句經, the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings”, and others. The extant versions generally stem from three major sources:


3 Yao Changshou 姚長壽, “Jingdu sanmei jing yu rentianjiao” 淨度三昧經與人天教, Zhonghua foxue xuebao 中華佛學學報 12 (1999), pp. 79–95. Saitô Takanobu 齊藤隆信, “Jingdu san-
works in the Chinese Buddhist canon, Dunhuang manuscripts, and manuscripts found in Nanatsu-dera in Japan, as mentioned in the Introduction, above. The discussion, below, will show that based on certain common characteristics among these versions and taken compositely, we can safely say that Jingdu sanmei jing was composed sometime around the first several decades of the fifth century AD.

First, we look at versions of Jingdu sanmei jing that derive from texts in the Buddhist Tripiṭaka canon. The earliest fragmentary quotations of Jingdu can be found in the forty-ninth juan of Jinglù yixiang 经律異相 (T 53, no. 2121), a Buddhist encyclopedia edited around the fifth and sixth centuries by Baochen 寶唱 and others. Fragments are found in other Chinese Tripiṭaka texts, such as Fayuan zhulin 法苑珠林 (T 53, no. 2122), Bianzheng lun 辨正論 (T 52, no. 2110), and so forth. They are present as well in Daoist scriptures, such as Daojiao yishu 道教義樞 (HY 1121).

In Dai Nihon zoku zōkyō 大日本續藏経 there is one juan of Jingdu sanmei jing which is considered to be the first juan of the sūtra.

Second, in the Dunhuang corpus there are several incomplete versions of Jingdu sanmei jing, including B. 8222, B. 8223, B. 8654, B. 8655, S. 4546, S. 7452, S. 2301, S. 2752, S. 7444, and S. 5960. These manuscripts present relatively complete first and third juan, but only a fragmentary second juan.

Finally, the Nanatsu-dera manuscript comprises a more complete second juan and a fragmentary third. Therefore, a combination of the Nanatsu-dera and Dunhuang manuscripts makes it possible to recon-
struct a fuller textual version. Such a combined version of *Jingdu sanmei jing* consists of the Buddha’s conversations with various bodhisattvas, as well as with celestial gods, King Bimbisāra, and others. The purpose of conversations like these was usually in order to instruct people to observe the Buddhist precepts and perform abstinence so that they can avoid tormenting rebirth in hell, and thus attain purity.  

Harumi Hirano Ziegler argues that the sutra is unlikely to have been composed in north China during the mid-fifth century when Buddhism had just recovered from persecution by Emperor Taiwu of the Northern Wei, as many previous Japanese scholars have suggested. Instead, it must rather have been formed in south China during the late-fourth or the first half of the fifth century, where, she believed, there were the libraries necessary for a Buddhist scholar to have constructed a scripture based on a wide range of Buddhist doctrines. This is based on the existence of various phrases that are critical of non-Chinese rulers and border regions, and because of the prevalence of indigenous Chinese religious elements in certain passages. In general, she believes that a reconstructed, composite version, as suggested, is very close to a complete original version of the scripture.  

Ziegler’s view notwithstanding, here my focus is on only one section of the so-called composite version of *Jingdu sanmei jing*, a section that may be called “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings”; I argue that it dates back to the sutra’s earliest stratum. My analysis is based on the following reasoning. According to early Buddhist catalogues, it seems that there were different versions of *Jingdu sanmei jing*, some supposedly having been subject to later modification. Scholars such as Sunayama Minoru 砂山稔 and Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄 have suggested that different sections of the sutra might have been composed by different “translators.”

I am therefore not certain to what extent the original version of *Jingdu sanmei jing* is preserved in Ziegler’s idea of a composite version. Sengyou’s 僧祐 (445–518 AD) catalogue *Chusanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 says that the “Record of the Origin of the Abstinence Days of the Eight Kings” 八王日齋緣記 is from a work he refers to as *Jingdu sanmei jing*. Also, in *Tiwei jing* 提謂經 (that is, the *Book of Tra-

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11 *Chu sanzang jiji*, T 55, no. 2145, p. 91A.
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*pusa*: it was Tiwei and Bahalika who were the first lay disciples of the Buddha, composed by Tanjing 賽靖 in north China during 453–464 AD, there is a similar account of the Days of the Eight Kings.\(^{12}\) Sengyou further claimed that there were two different versions of *Jingdu*, as seen in separate sections of his catalogue. One was by an anonymous translator and the other was in the collection of Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (460–494 AD).\(^{13}\) *Chusanzang jiji* finally notes that there was an old excerpt of the sūtra, but it had been lost.\(^{14}\) A later catalogue titled *Zhongjing mulu* 真經目錄 by Fajing 法經 of the Sui dynasty states that *Jingdu sanmei jing* was a sutra translated in Yangzhou by Baoyun 寶雲 (376–449 AD) and then also mentions a different version of the sūtra that had been incautiously and willfully tampered with by Xiao Ziliang.\(^{15}\) Based on these evidences, it seems that the original version of *Jingdu sanmei jing* that includes passages describing the Days of the Eight Kings would not have been composed later than the first half of the fifth century. This suggests furthermore that the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings” was once in the earliest version of the sūtra.

The earliest textual source to talk about the Days of the Eight Kings is from a fragmentary quotation titled “The Eight King Messengers Inspect Good and Evil on the Six Abstinence Days” 八王使者於六齋日簡閱善惡, as included in the aforementioned *Jinglü yixiang*.\(^{16}\) (This passage is the first of several translated, below, in the appendix.) Through a comparison with the Dunhuang manuscripts, we see that the first half of this paragraph is probably an abridged quotation of the same account of the Days of the Eight Kings that forms the basis of S. 4546 and B. 8654, whilst the second half of the paragraph, together with another quotation, catalogued in *Jinglü yixiang* under the title “Whether You Should Be Reborn in Heaven or Fall into Hell, When You Die You Will Be Received to See Either the Good or Bad States


\(^{13}\) These were, first, an item in *Chu sanzang jiji*’s “New collection as continuation of the catalogue of the miscellaneous scriptures of anonymous translation” 新集續撰失譯雜經錄, where it is said that *Jingdu sanmei jing* had 2 juan and its other name was *Jingdu jing*; it is also noted that this text was one of the new collections, and that copies were still available (*Chu sanzang jiji*, T 55, no. 2145, p. 21c). Second is a mention in the “Catalogue of the Newly Collected Excerpts of Sūtras” 新集抄經錄, where we learn that the manuscript *Jingdu sanmei jing* had four juan, and was in the Buddhist manuscript collection of Prince Wenxuan of Jingling 竟陵文宣王 of the Southern Qi dynasty, namely, Xiao Ziliang (ibid., pp. 37c–38a).

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 38a.

\(^{15}\) Fajing, *Zhongjing mulu*, T 55, no. 2146, pp. 115a–16c; 127b.

\(^{16}\) T 53, no. 2121, p. 259c.
of Rebirth" 鷹生天墮地獄臨終有迎見善惡處, is equivalent to the latter part of the B. 8222 manuscript, which is a fragmentary manuscript with the note “The upper juan of Foshuo Jingdu sanmei jing 佛說淨度三昧行卷上.” The initial part of the B. 8222 manuscript is similar to Fa Lin’s 法琳 (572–640 AD) quotation of the Jingdu sanmei jing in his Bianzheng lun (also mentioned above). In the second juan of Jingdu sanmei jing (lines 49–73) from the Nanatsu-dera, we find a parallel to the complete version of B. 8222.

In this regard, the textual sources that deal with the Days of the Eight Kings, which we turn to next, will include existing fragmentary quotations in Jinglü yixiang, the Dunhuang manuscripts, and the Nanatsu-dera manuscripts (see full translations, below).

THE HYBRID QUALITY OF THE “RECORD OF THE DAYS OF THE EIGHT KINGS”

As mentioned, our earliest extant catalogue of Buddhist writings already mentioned long ago that a now nonextant work describing the Days of the Eight Kings, titled “Record of the Origin of the Abstinence Days of the Eight Kings,” was itself formed from various passages in Jingdu sanmei jing. But this early reference to the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings” is not enough, mostly because those passages constituting the “Record” do not tell us anything substantial about the Eight Kings. Nor do they bring us closer to understanding how Jingdu itself was formed. I am arguing in this regard that a substantive account and an identification of the Eight Kings can be made from an investigation of both Chinese and Indic sources related to the main theme — namely, divinities (kings) who on certain abstinence days make accounts of human behavior. I hope to reveal in this way something about the process of sūtra-making in China, as it relates to our study of the formation of Jingdu sanmei jing.

The central issue of the “Record of the Eight Kings” is the inspection and report of the deeds of sentient beings by celestial bureaucrats on specific days. Due to its hybrid quality, the origin of the “Record” has puzzled scholars for many years, in particular the issue of why both Indian and Chinese deities are integrated into one text, and the

17 Ibid., p. 259b–c.
18 Falin, Bianzheng lun 辨正論, T 52, no. 2110, p. 495c.
20 Chusanzang jiji (T 55, no. 2145, p. 91A).
enigma of the identity of the Eight Kings. Here is one of the distinct fragmentary accounts of the “Record of the Eight Kings” in the Dunhuang manuscripts; its detailed account parallels the first half of the quotation of “The Eight King Messengers Inspect Good and Evil on the Six Abstinence Days” from Jinglü yixiang (cited above):

Parallel Dunhuang ms Passages of “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings” in S. 4546 and B. 8654

The Days of the Eight Kings are the days when Indra and his thirty-two assistant guardian ministers, the Four Guardian Great Kings, the Director of Life-Mandates, the Director of Record, the Great Kings of Wuluo (the Five Rākṣasas?), and the Eight King Messengers all distribute themselves for a comprehensive tour of inspection. Carrying the documents reported by the Four (Celestial) Kings on the fifteenth and thirtieth days, they investigate and check the implementation of good and evil by local people, the barbarians of the eight directions, demonic spirits, flying birds and running beasts so that they know whether everything conforms to what has been recorded in documents. The King of Hell also dispatches his assistant ministers and minor kings, the Administrators for Records (?), the Supervisory Officer, the Chamberlain for Law Enforcement, the Duke of Post (?), the General of the Hidden in the Night (?) and the Five Emperor Messengers out at the same time of the same day. They receive the Heavenly bamboo tally of messengers to govern all sentient beings, to stop and probe the illegal, to arrest the evil and to reward the good. If someone is guilty, they then punish him. For those who have committed repeated crimes, their souls will soon be arrested and their lives will be taken away. For those who have more merit, their records will be dispatched to Heaven and Hell. They will have their lifespan increased and have Counters (the three days’ reckoning) added in their lifespan. They will be removed from death and have their lives confirmed. [These agents] are dispatched eight times per year, so that these days are called the days of the Eight Kings. If you want to know what these days are, they are the beginning of spring, spring equinox, the beginning of summer, the summer solstice, the beginning of autumn, the autumn equinox, the beginning of winter, and winter solstice. Matters are most urgent on these days. At the end of a year, when administrative matters come to an end, and crime and merit are finally to be confirmed by assessment,
it is a crucial time to decide whether they should die or live. ... From midnight of the day before until midnight of the day after is the time. In terms of those who commit repeated crimes, it is said that, if they have committed crimes since the previous abstinence day of the Eight Kings, they still can be saved by spare merits and stay secure and stable without receiving any harm, because the General Celestial Emperor, the Guardian King Messengers, the Lord of the Director of Life-Mandates pardon (the misdeeds) because of merit. After that, if they commit them again in the latter abstinence day of the Eight Kings, they are considered as having committed repeated crimes.

This paragraph exhibits a hybrid quality in three respects: firstly, it consists of both Indian and Chinese religious ideologies; secondly, the other-world bureaucrats in this text include both Indian and Chinese deities; thirdly, the term “Days of the Eight Kings” is associated with both the Buddhist six abstinence days and the Daoist eight seasonal days.

In order to trace the origin of the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings”, I think it is essential to determine what link there is between both Indian and Chinese religious ideas which appear together in this text, and what relation there is between the Buddhist six abstinence days and the Days of the Eight Kings, thought to be a Buddhist adaptation of the Daoist eight seasonal days. In what follows, I attempt to unravel these two issues. The investigation will question whether and how the key Indian and Chinese deities in the “Record” are in fact associated, respectively, with the Buddhist six abstinence days and the Daoist eight seasonal days.

**Indian Deities in the Record of the Eight Kings**

To begin with, we should consider the Indian deities, which include Indra, thirty-two guardian ministers, and Four Great Kings. Given that the term “six abstinence days” is in the title of the fragmentary quotation concerning the Days of the Eight Kings in *Jinglū yixiang* and that also in the “Record of the Eight Kings” the fifteenth and thirtieth days are the days during which the Four Great Kings memorialize their report, it is clear that these deities are the ones involved in the celestial inspection of humans on the three abstinence days of fifteen days, or the six abstinence days in one month, as given in a text that is referred to as “The Four Great Kings.” The latter has been translated into Chinese
many times since the third century. In the Pali Nikāyas, the so-called Discourse Basket of the early writings of Theravāda Buddhism that is equivalent overall to the Chinese āgamas (or Ahan jing 阿含經), it can be found as a story entitled “The Four Great Kings” (Mahārājā) in the Anguttara nikāya. The story says that on the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days of the lunar half-month, the minister of the Four Great Kings, the princes of the Kings, and the Kings themselves (in order, respectively) perambulate the world and investigate the behavior of human beings. The Four Great Kings then report to Indra’s court and, according to an increase or decrease in people’s meritorious deeds, Indra will be either pleased or displeased.

Here, the process of investigation of humans’ behavior involves the assembly of devas: the assembly of the heavenly realm of the Four Great Kings and that of the heavenly realm of the Thirty-three devas. The report is presented and discussed in the Hall of Righteousness, where Indra, the thirty-two devas, and the Four Great Kings gather. Bimala C. Law and Miyasaka Yūshō 宮坂有勝 have both suggested that the depiction of the assemblies of devas in the Pali nikāyas ran parallel to images of public assemblies of the Kṣatriya tribes during the time of the Buddha.

On the role of Indra, T.W. Rhys Davids also commented as follows:

But he is no absolute monarch. He is imagined in the likeness of a chieftain of a Kosala clan. The gods meet and deliberate in their Hall of Good Counsel; and Sakka, on ordinary peaceful occasions, consults with them rather than issues to them his commands.

In another sūtra, the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the Buddha once likened the assembly of his Saṅgha to that of the Kṣatriya tribe of Vajji-

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22 Dalou tan jing 大樓炭經 (T 1, no. 29, p. 298a–n); Shiji jing 世紀經 of the Dirghāgama 長阿含經 (T 1, no. 1, pp. 134b–35a); j. 16 of Ekottarāgama 增阿含經 (T 2, no. 125, pp. 624b–25a); j. 40 of the Complete Samyukṭa-gama 聯阿含經 (T 2, no. 99, pp. 295c–96a); j. 2 of Lishi apitan lun (Lokotthanāhādikarma) 立世阿毘曇論 (T 32, no. 1844, pp. 184b–35a); Qishi jing 起世經 (T 1, no. 25, pp. 401c–28) (Sūtra on the Cause and Origin of the World); j. 7 of Qishi jing 起世經 (T 1, no. 24, pp. 346c–47a); and Dazhidu lun 大智度論 (T 25, no. 1599, p. 160a). See Henrik H. Sørensen, “Divine Scrutiny of Human morals in an Early Chinese Buddhist Sūtra: A Study of the Si tianwang jing (T 590),” Studies in Central & East Asian Religions 8 (1995), pp. 44–83.


ans. Bimala C. Law argued that such a parallel suggests parallelism in the institutions themselves. In this regard, the celestial authority structure in the text of the Four Great Kings of the Pali Nikāyas would probably run parallel to the image of the political institution of Kṣatriya clans.

Moreover, in the fifth-century Buddhaghosa’s remark on the text of the Four Great Kings (found in his commentary to the Anguttaranikāya titled Manorathapūrani) the process of reporting was described in the following way: the ministers of the Four Great Kings would receive the record on palm leaves from the local deities and inscribe the names of those who performed meritorious acts on a golden plate. This process would be repeated by the sons of the Four Great Kings and the Four Great Kings themselves on the relevant days, and then the golden plate would be presented to Indra’s court. A similar account about the recording of human behaviour on a golden plate can also be found in the tale of Kuru dhamma in Jātaka no. 276.

The inscription on a golden plate here reminds us of the royal charter engraved on copperplate, which had been commonly practiced throughout India until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Usually inscriptions on copperplate recorded tax-free lands granted by ancient Indian rulers. Our earliest Indian copperplate inscription is probably a Mauryan example excavated in Sōhgaurā, containing a public notice about two storehouses. It was done in Brāhmī script and was dated to the third or fourth century BC. The earliest authenticated royal charters on copperplate were the Prakrit charters of the Pallava kings of Kānci – dated to the middle of the fourth century AD

27 Law, Kṣatriya Tribes of Ancient India, pp. 84–88.
28 Max Walleser and Hermann Kopp, Manorathapūrani Buddhaghosa’s Commentary on the Anguttara-nikāya, vol. II (London; New York [etc.]: Pub. for the Pali Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 233–34. The use of Pāli sources in this paper is to demonstrate that the metaphor of inscribing deeds on golden plates, mirroring the secular practice of royal inscription on copper plates, derives from the Indian cultural sphere. It does not attempt to suggest that the corresponding Sanskrit sources on which the Chinese translations of the text of the Four Great Kings are based are later than the Pāli sources.
and excavated in Southern India. The parallel images between celestial golden plates and secular copperplate suggest that Indian Buddhists might have adopted the practice of engraving royal charters on copperplate in an ancient Indian context over to a notion of celestial records of people’s deeds. In addition, according to the Mahavamsa, when King Duṭṭhagāmanī (probably ca. first or second century BC) was on his deathbed, he demanded that the book which recorded all his meritorious deeds be brought to him, and he asked a scribe to read it aloud. With the merits he had performed in life, the king was then assured that he would be reborn in the Tuśita Heaven. This suggests that the idea of recording meritorious deeds in order to gain a good rebirth was something already in practice.

Chinese Deities in the “Record of the Eight Kings”

In contrast to the six abstinence days, during the eight seasonal days deities assemble in Heaven to report the deeds of people in a Daoist context. Especially connected to the eight days were the Eight Trigrams Deities, who were considered to be messengers of the deity known as Great One (Taiyi 太一) and their duty was, once again, to record people’s deeds during their lives. They may even have reflected aspects of a historical event in late Eastern Han, when eight envoys were dispatched to examine local mores and behavior all over the empire. The thirteenth section of Laozi zhong jing 老子中經 (Central Scripture of Laozi) reads:

Xuanji 璇璣 is the Lord of North Dipper. He is the Marquis King of Heaven. He takes charge of the twelve thousand deities and holds

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34 Liu Cunren (Liu Ts’un-Yan) 柳存仁 has researched the quasi-mythical figure of Eastern Han Luan Ba 欒巴, who was one of eight imperial envoys dispatched in 142 AD by Emperor Shun 徽 to observe the conduct of people all over the empire. Liu argues that court eunuchs, as a character-type, were later worked into celestial bureaucratic structures depicted in Daoist scriptures; and because Luan had once been a court eunuch, he was probably a key figure among them. Liu also held that the eight messengers of the Great One (that is, the Eight Trigrams Deities; an identification that is discussed below, n. 36), frequently mentioned in Daoist scriptures as embarking on inspectional tours to probe the behaviour of humans and bureaucrats on specific days, were probably modeled on this 142 AD event of the Eight Envoys (who became lauded as “Eight Outstanding Personages”); Hou Han shu 後漢書 (Zhonghua edn.) 61, p. 2029; see Liu Cunren, “Was Celestial Master Zhang a Historical Figure?” in Benjamin Penny, ed., Daoism in History: Essays in Honour of Liu Ts’un-yan (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 219–26.
the life register of people. Men also have him in their navels. The Lord of the Great One is the King of Men...\textsuperscript{35}

The Great One has eight messengers. They are the Eight Trigrams Deities. The Great One is in the center. He is the chief in charge of reviewing established accounts. The eight messengers memorialize the review to the Great One on the eight seasonal days.\textsuperscript{36}

Chen Guofu 陳國符 and Kristofer Schipper date \textit{Laozi zhong jing} before the fourth-century \textit{Baopuzi},\textsuperscript{37} but other estimates would date it to around the mid-fourth to mid-fifth centuries.\textsuperscript{38} The dating is significant

\textsuperscript{35} Taiyi, the Great One, means cosmic oneness and is also the personification of a supreme stellar deity who resides in the reddish star Kochab. Since the late Warring States period, Taiyi had been regarded as the supreme god of heaven and remained so in certain later Daoist movements; see Poul Anderson, “Taiyi,” in Fabrizio Pregadio, ed., \textit{The Encyclopedia of Taoism} (London: Routledge, 2008) 2, pp. 956–99.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Taishang laojun zhong jing} 太上老君中經 (Weng Dujian 吳濬健, \textit{Daozang zimu yinde 道藏子目引得}, Combined Indexes to the Authors and Titles of Books in Two Collections of Taoist Literature [Beijing: Yenching University, 1935; Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, no. 25; rpt. Taipei: Chengwen, 1966; hereafter HY]) 1180 1, p. 9a.

\textsuperscript{37} Chen Guofu, \textit{Daozang yuanliu kao 道藏源流考} (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), p. 80, considers that the \textit{Laojun yuli zhenjing 老君玉曆真經} that appears in Ge Hong’s (283–363 AD) \textit{Baopuzi} list is the same as the \textit{Laozi zhong jing} in the Daoist anthology \textit{Yunji qiqian 青牙七篆}. Kristofer Schipper, “The Inner World of the Lao-Tzu Chung-Ching,” in Huang Chun-mei 黃春梅, ed., \textit{Essays on Taoism: A Berlin Symposium} (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), pp. 118–19, says that this is supported by the fact that certain talismans in \textit{Laozi zhong jing} cannot be found anywhere but in \textit{Baopuzi}. Moreover, a paragraph in \textit{Tiwei jing 提謂經} in fact addresses the correspondence between deities such as the Great One and the Eight Trigrams Deities, as well as human organs; see the \textit{Tiwei jing} (P. 3732; \textit{Dunhuang baogao 敦煌寶贄}, vol. 130, 277b). \textit{Tiwei}, like \textit{Jingdu}, is an early-medieval indigenous Chinese sūtra; it was composed by Tanjing after the end of the Buddhist persecution in north China in the mid-5th c. The paragraph mentioned is an abbreviated quotation from the 19th, 17th, 18th, etc. chapters of \textit{Laozi zhong jing}. This suggests that at the time certain of the religious formulas and systems of \textit{Laozi zhong jing} had already appeared in particular indigenous Chinese Buddhist scriptures. See also Gil Raz, “Imperial Efficacy: Debates on Imperial Ritual in Early Medieval China and the Emergence of Daoist Ritual Schemata,” in Florian C. Reiter, ed., \textit{Purposes, Means and Convictions in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium} (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), p. 90; and John Lagerwey, “Deux écrits taoïstes anciens,” \textit{CEA} 14 (2004), pp. 139–71.

\textsuperscript{38} Maeda Shigeki 松田繁樹, “Roshi chūkei kakusho 老子中經観書,” in Yoshinobu Sakade, 坂出祥伸, ed., \textit{Chūgoku kodai no yūjō shisō no sogō teki kenkyū 中國古代養生思想の総合的研究所} (Tokyo: Hirakawa, 1988), pp. 474–502, found that in regard to the visualization of the divided inner cosmos of the human body there are parallel contents between \textit{Laozi zhong jing} and \textit{Taishang lingbao wufu xu 太上靈寶五符序} (HY no. 388, dated ca. 4th–5th cc.). He suggested that, although the idea of visualizing the body may be traced back to around the third century, it is safer to say that the scriptural form was probably created around the fifth. Kato Chie 加藤千惠, “Roshi chūkei to naitan shisō no genryō 老子中經と内丹思想の源流, \textit{TS} 87 (1990), p. 22, indicated that in section 27 of \textit{Laozi zhongjing}, the “gingya 色法” was mentioned as one of the five drug-ingesting or healing processes undertaken to achieve immortality, and in \textit{Zhen’gao 真誥} (HY no. 1010) it is said that the administration of ginya was first known in year 2 of Taihe 泰和 (307 AD). Based on the premise that the current version of \textit{Laozi zhong jing} is basically its original version, she estimates the date as about the mid-4th to mid-5th c. See also Maeda’s rev. of Ofuchi Ninji 大橋忍尉 and Ishii Masako 石井昌子, eds., \textit{Rikuchō Tō Sō no kokuben sho’in Dōkyō tensenkim mokuroku sakuin 六朝唐末の古文献所引道教典籍目録 索引}, \textit{TS} 75 (1989), pp. 93–94.
when thinking about the origin of the eight seasonal days, since we see in it not only the Eight Trigrams Deities, but also other deities that have parallels in the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings,” such as the Director of Life-Mandates, the Director of Records, and the Five Emperor Messengers: these are pictured as celestial bureaucrats who help in the periodic inspection of people’s conduct. In particular we must consider the Five Emperors, the name itself having various definitions according to different Chinese texts.\(^{39}\) It is in the *Laozi zhong jing* that they are depicted as periodic invocatory and emissary deities involved in revising people’s life records. The accounts of the Five Emperors are mainly in sections 14 and 15 of the *Laozi zhong jing*. In 14 we read:

The navel is the destiny of humans. It can also be called Zhongji 中極, Taiyuan 太淵, Kunlun 崑崙, Teshu 神樞, and Wucheng 五城 (Five Citadels). In these Five Citadels, there are five perfected immortals. The Five Citadels are the Five Emperors. Apart from the Five Citadels, there are eight officials. They are the Eight Trigrams Deities. Together with the Great One, they are the nine Chief Ministers. Apart from the eight trigrams, there are the Twelve Towers. They are the twelve Crown Princes and twelve Grand Officers. Together with the deities of the Three Burners (esophagus, lining of the stomach, and urethra), they are the twenty-seven Grand Officers. The deities of the four limbs are the eighty-one paramount servicemen. Therefore, the Perfected immortals of the Five Citadels are responsible for memorializing their record of each season. The Eight Deities are responsible for memorializing the record on the eight seasonal days. The twelve Grand Officers are responsible for memorializing the record on the last day of each month. Every month, people must not be slack. Then you are free from the record that would be memorialized; you should always visualize these deities and stay with them (in your mind), and then you can achieve longevity. Therefore, at midnight of the last and first days of each month and the eight seasonal days, the Great One always beats the drum in the Five Citadels to summon all deities to check and confirm the merit and virtue of people, contemplating and discussing if they are good or evil. If they are in the record, their lives will be extended and all the deities will recommend them. Whereas, if they are not in the record, they will eventually perish and the Director of Life-mandate will delete them from the register of the living. Therefore, in the night of

the last and first days of each month and the eight seasonal days, when you are going to bed, you should always visualize the Upper Great One, the Middle Great One and the Lower Great One, the Perfected immortals of the Five Citadels and the Twelve Towers, and invoke as follows:

The Celestial Emperor, the Lord of the Great One, the Celestial Emperor, the Lord of the Great One. I sincerely greet all you deities and I am intimate with you. The Director of Records, the Director of Life-Mandates, the Jade Ladies of six ding 六丁 will delete X from the register of the dead and write X to that of the living. They should all say that I shall live long.40

This passage of Laozi zhong jing claims that there are deities residing in the parts of the human body related to them. The term “Five Citadels” is considered to be an epithet of Mt. Kunlun, which in this context denotes both the navel and the cosmic center. The salient aspects of Mt. Kunlun, the Five Citadels, and the twelve towers are divinized both as the Five Emperors and the Twelve Grand Officers. Together with the Eight Trigrams Deities, they are painted as periodic inspectorial deities, who submit their reports to the Celestial assembly, and, by visualizing these deities on the Eight Seasonal days, one’s life may be prolonged. Moreover, the dynamics of this celestial bureaucracy relies on an assembly of deities who must create administrative paperwork.

The above passage of Laozi zhong jing and the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings” share several similarities. Firstly, the central theme of both is that human lifespans are directly linked to human behavior, which is being investigated by the inspectorial deities on periodic days. Secondly, in both texts the procedure depends on paperwork. Thirdly, the key Chinese inspectorial deities in the “Re-

Figure 1. Gao Shanmu’s Stupa for His Parents
The object is housed in the Museum of Gansu Province; figure adapted from Yin Guangming, Bei Liang shita yanjiu (cited n. 42), p. 33, fig. 25.

40 HY 1160, 1, pp. 10b–11a.
cord” also appear in *Laozi zhong jing*. In addition, the Buddhist abstinence days of the Eight Kings are identical with the Daoist eight seasonal days of the Eight Trigrams Deities, and the Five Emperor Messengers as inspectoral deities in the “Record” seem derived from the role of the Five Emperors in *Laozi zhong jing*. Hence, it seems to me that there is a link between the Daoist Eight Trigrams Deities and the Buddhist Eight King Messengers that we saw in *Jingdu sanmei jing*.

There is a difference as well between the two texts in regard to the duties of the inspectoral deities on the eight seasonal days. In *Laozi zhong jing*, during the eight seasonal days the Eight Trigrams Deities ascend to Heaven to memorialize their report, whereas, in the “Record of the the Eight Kings” the eight seasonal days are when the inspectoral deities go out to investigate the world. This is similar to what the Four Great Kings and their subordinates will do on the three abstinence days, as seen in the *Aṅguttara nikāya* text *The Four Great Kings* (discussed above). The difference possibly results from the especially hybrid nature of the “Record of the Eight Kings”. If we want to suggest a direct link between the “Record” and *Laozi zhong jing*, we need relatively more substantial sources. Thus, in the following I show how such a suggestive link between the Eight Trigrams Deities and the Eight King Messengers is embodied in archaeological objects of around the fifth century, in general the period when the Northern Liang regime held sway over far northwest China.

**Northern Liang Votive Stūpas and Deities Associated with the Eight Trigrams**

Numerous votive stūpas from the northwest in the time of the Northern Liang (北凉 dynasty; 401–439 AD; subsequently conquered by the Northern Wei, then decamped to Turfan, 443–460 AD) have puzzled scholars for many years. Inscribed on their bottom registers are eight deities, four male and four female, along with symbols of the eight trigrams associated with the ancient tradition of the *Yijing*. In Wang Yi’s research on one of these votive stūpas, created by a certain Gao Shanmu for his parents and preserved in better condition than other stūpas (see figure 1 at left), he was first to point out that the eight figures reflect the sort of correlation of the set of eight trigrams

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41 The male and female deities on each shoulder in the Record of the Days of Eight Kings also appear in the *Laozi zhong jing*, but their duty as scribes of people’s behavior is not mentioned. See HY 1160, 1, pp. 16b–17a.

to members of a family — father and three sons (eldest, middle, and youngest), and mother and three daughters (eldest, middle, youngest) — as explained in the “Shuogua zhuan” (Commentary on the Trigrams, a part of the Ten Wings, i.e., the set of early commentaries on the Yijing purported to be from Confucius or members of his school). The register above the eight deities is usually made up of inscriptions containing dedicatory statements of the donors, followed by passages from Foshuo shi’er yinyuan jing (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Twelve Codependent Originations). In India of the Gupta period (third to sixth centuries AD), the practice of inscribing stūpas with the Pratītyasamutpāda-sūtra (the Sanskrit title of the later Chinese Sūtra of the Twelve Codependent Originations) in order to represent relics of Buddha’s teaching was very popular. On these stūpas, farther up, were normally images of the seven past Buddhas and of the Buddha of the future — Maitreya. The Northern Liang votive stūpas are mainly found in the three areas usually associated with Liangzhou — Jiuquan, Dunhuang, and Turfan. According to the seventh-century Chinese pilgrim-monk Yijing (義淨), Buddhist monks in India sometimes built small stūpas for the deceased for the purpose of housing their bodily relics. Despite the fact that some stūpas were partly damaged or perhaps incomplete, or in some cases the above-mentioned correlation between the eight trigrams and the prototypical family seems mistaken, most of the images of the eight trigrams deity-figures in the Northern Liang votive stūpas appear to follow generally this notion. Also, there is an image of North Dipper (the constellation of Great Bear) engraved on the top, or crown, of this stūpa. As indicated in the quotation from sect. 13 of Laozi zhong jing, above, North Dipper is the deity who takes charge of the 12,000 deities and holds the life-registers of people, thus the North Dipper on this stupa could also embody such belief. See Wang Yi, Bei Liang shita 北涼石塔, in Wenwu ziliao congkan 文物資料叢刊 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1977), pp. 179–80; and Yin, Bei Liang shita yanjiu 北涼石塔研究 (Hsinchu: Chueh feng, 2000).

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45 Stanley K. Abe, Ordinary Images (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 155–56; fig. 3.45, noted that the most closely related stūpa with the image of the Eight Buddhas is a miniature stone votive stūpa from Mathurā dated to around 420–440 AD. The stūpa has a square base with four standing figures and an octagonal drum above with eight seated Buddha figures. Abe assumed a visual link between the Northern Liang stūpas and those from India and Central Asia. Joanna Gottfried Williams, The Art of Gupta India Empire and Province (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 70–71.

Archaeological analyses of Indian votive stūpas seem to confirm Yi-jing’s observation: they were funerary monuments dedicated to the deceased. Although no human remains have been found in Northern Liang votive stūpas (probably because cremation was practiced very little by local people of that period), they seem to have been made for the deceased, as were their Indian counterparts.

Stanley K. Abe has argued that there is a suggestive link between the images of the Eight Archivists 八史 (another name for the Eight Trigrams Deities) related in two Daoist scriptures and the above eight deities on Northern Liang votive stūpas; the Daoist scriptures are Tai-shang tongling bashi shengwen zhenxingtu 太上通靈八史聖文真形圖 (HY 767) (Chart of the Saintly Writ and True Shape of the Most High Eight Archivists of Spiritual Communication) and Taishang wujidadao ziran zhengyi wuchengfu shangjing 太上無極大道自然真一五稱符上經 (HY 671) (The Upper Scripture of the Five Ascendant Talismans of the Highest, Limitless Great Way and the Self-Generating Perfect One). Abe bases his argument on Gil Raz’s research into the two scriptures, yet remains somewhat uncertain as to the specific source of the image of the eight deities. He believes that the appearance of the eight trigrams with their associated eight divine figures on so many Northern Liang votive stūpas is an unusual, early evidence of the adoption of Chinese traditional, popular cosmological beliefs into early Buddhist images.

We can now accept that during Northern Liang, Chinese Buddhist stūpas show that the Eight Trigrams Deities, a Chinese Daoist idea mentioned in as early a text as Laozi zhong jing, became adopted into Buddhist ritual practice in Liangzhou – as attested in Jingdu sanmei jing, which seems to have been composed about 400–450 AD. Accordingly, the Eight Kings would naturally reflect that same Buddhist adoption of Daoist deities. It is noteworthy that the monk Baoyun, the first to be referred to as a “translator” of Jingdu sanmei jing, was originally from Liangzhou, the main administrative area of the Northern Liang. It should be noted that on the right side of one of the Eight Trigrams

49 Ibid., pp. 128, 165.
50 See above, n. 15.
51 This is according to Chu sanzang jiji (T 55, no. 2145, p. 113a).
Deities of the Suo E 索阿 (or Suo Ejun 索阿俊) stūpa there is an inscription reading “tian shen wang 天神王,” meaning “celestial kings.” On the abdomen of one of its Trigram Deities there is also the character wang 王, or “king” (see figure 2). Abe has assumed that these characters were inscribed later.\(^{52}\) The phrase “tian shen wang” also appears in another of Baoyun’s works, co-translated with Zhiyan 智嚴, namely Foshuo sitianwang jing 佛說四天王經 (Sūtra of the Four Celestial Kings Spoken by the Buddha). In it, the phrase denotes the eponymous Four Great Kings, who, in other translations, are usually denoted by the two characters “tian wang 天王.” Foshuo sitianwang jing was adapted from the text of the Indic writing titled Mahārājā, but its content includes many additional Chinese religious ideas. In many respects, Foshuo sitianwang jing is very similar to the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings”.\(^{53}\) Is it possible that the inscription on the Suo E stūpa implies that the Eight

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**Figure 2. Miniature Votive Stūpa of Suo E**

Gansu province; dated 435 AD, under the Northern Liang. It is housed in the Cleveland Museum of Art; figure adapted from J. Keith Wilson’s “Miniature Votive Stūpa” (cited n. 52), p. 313, fig. 27. In the bottom register, we see the character “王 (king)” on the torso of the rightmost deity. Just to the right of that (on the vertical part of what is perhaps a portal) are the three barely visible vertical characters “天神王 (celestial kings).”

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\(^{53}\) Like the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings,” Foshuo sitianwang jing includes the Daoist idea that prolonging the lifespan is a benefit received by those who perform good deeds
Trigrams Deities were considered as some sort of celestial kings who functioned like the Four Great Kings, during the Northern Liang regime? It seems so. Finally, while there is a certain diversity in the way the images of the eight trigram figures are rendered among the votive stūpas, overall the appearance of the Eight Trigrams Deities seems to model the image of Indian Buddhist spiritual beings rather than Chinese gods.\textsuperscript{54} It seems to me that, although the Eight Trigrams Deities have their origin in a Chinese indigenous religion, in these stūpas they have been amalgamated into Buddhist contexts, just like the Eight Kings in the \textit{Jingdu sanmei jing}.

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

It appears that the “Record of the Days of the Eight Kings” in \textit{Jingdu sanmei jing} is strongly associated with Buddhists of the Northern Liang. Ever since the two versions of the \textit{Zhongjing mulu} by Fajing and Yancong, respectively, later Buddhist catalogues recorded that one version of \textit{Jingdu sanmei jing} was translated by Baoyun in the Yangzhou area of south China. Ziegler has argued that negative comments on non-Chinese rulers and border regions in the current version of \textit{Jingdu sanmei jing} help us to deduce that the sūtra was composed in southern China.\textsuperscript{55} It is probable, however, that the sections containing these comments originated separately from the “Record”; they could have been added (together with the “Record”) after the Northern Liang monk moved to the south, or when the sūtra was adapted by southern editors later, such as Xiao Ziliang.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus we see that the identity of the Eight Kings is the pivotal clue to the formation of the \textit{Jingdu sanmei jing}. My investigation shows that

\begin{itemize}
    \item in life, and a shortened lifespan is a punishment for evil-doers. Unlike the text of the Four Great Kings, where Indra and his thirty-two devas would be delighted and just say that the Deva-hosts would be increased and the Asura-hosts would decrease when there were many people who did good in life, \textit{Foshuo sitianwang jing} says: “Indra and his thirty-three assistant ministers would all be pleased. Indra orders the Director of Life-Mandates to have their lifespans increased and to gain benefit of the Counters (the three days’ reckoning). He will dispatch good deities to protect their persons.”
    \item \textsuperscript{55} Ziegler, “Sinification of Buddhism,” p. 96; also Makita and Ochiai, eds., \textit{Nanatsu-dera koitsu kyōten kenkyū sōsho}, pp. 67, 83.
    \item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{Zhongjing mulu} (T 55, no. 2146, p. 127b).
\end{itemize}
the section called the Record of the Days of the Eight Kings is strongly associated with Buddhist practice in Liangzhou, just as is the first person to be mentioned as “translator” of the *Jingdu sanmei jing*. Although I am not certain whether the author was definitely Baoyun, it seems to me that this regional element is a key feature in understanding the *Jingdu sanmei jing* and the way it was composed. In addition, the link integrating the key Indian and Chinese deities in the Record of the Days of the Eight Kings is probably the fact that these deities (in their original Indian and Chinese sources) all related to a religious belief in the investigation of people’s deeds on specific days.

Recent scholarship has been paying more attention to the complex intertwining of Buddhism and Daoism in medieval China. Robert Sharf stresses that it could easily be misleading and oversimplified to regard the development of Chinese Buddhism merely as an interplay between the two substantial entities – Buddhism and Chinese indigenous religion. Christine Mollier’s case study of medieval Budh-Daoist scriptures reveals that “What we find in these examples is not mere hybridization or passive borrowing, but a unique type of scriptural production, whereby the two traditions mirrored one another.” In his case study of the history of the Southern sacred peak Nanyue, James Robson voices concerns about the conventional ideas of “influence” or “syncretism” in descriptions of medieval Budh-Daoist relations, arguing that these presumptions misinterpret or overlook the details of the historical contexts that lay beneath the transformations in the religious landscape. These examinations of contextual detail have broadened our understanding of the mechanisms of interaction between Buddhism and Daoism.

Adding to the recent progress in scholarship, the present research offers another perspective on the interplay between Buddhism and Daoism in a certain Buddhist scripture of the early-medieval period. It shows that, in some cases, the interplay could have been based on a mutual accommodation between parallel religious ideas, one Indian and the other Chinese. The association between the Eight Kings in the Chinese Buddhist scripture *Jingdu sanmei jing* and the depictions seen in votive stūpas of the Northern Liang is an example of how, through

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similar observances of abstinence days and parallel conceptions of the otherworld bureaucratic process, Chinese and Indian (Daoist and Buddhist) ideas and practices came together in fifth-century China.

Translators of Fragments of the Days of the Eight Kings from Two Sources

Two quotations in Jinglü yixiang 經律異相, as collected and printed in Taishō (T53, no. 2121)

1. “The Eight King Messengers Inspect Good and Evil on the Six Abstinence Days”

The days of the Eight Kings: They are the days when Indra and his thirty-two guardian ministers, the Four Guardian Great Kings, the Director of Life-mandate, the Director of Records, the Great Kings of Wuluo (the Five Rākṣasas?), and the Eight King Messengers all distribute themselves and circulate everywhere. Then, carrying what the Four (Celestial) Kings report on the fifteenth and thirtieth days, they investigate and check the implementation of good or evil by people. The King of Hell also dispatches all his assistant ministers and minor kings out at the same time. If there is a crime, they will then record it. On the previous abstinence day of the Eight Kings, any wrongdoing which people have committed can be counterbalanced by spare merits. Those people would still be secure and stable without getting any harm. Merits can be used to pardon (misdeeds). Up to the latter fast abstinence of the Eight Kings, if they have committed it again, those who have committed many crimes will have their life-span reduced, and the article (of their punishment) is to be sentenced to death, according to the allotted time, day, month and year (of the date of their death). The documents will be dispatched to Hell. When the (administration) of Hell receives the document, they dispatch prison demons, who

60 It is not certain who were “The Great Kings of Wuluo 大王”. Whalen W. Lai, “The Earliest Buddhist Religion in China: T'i-wei Po-li Ching and Its Historical Significance,” in David W. Chappell, ed., Buddhism and Taoist Practice in Medieval Society (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 10–35, translated the phrase as “five spirits”. In Yunji qiqian 雲笈七籤 (HY no. 1026, j. 56, p. 2b, l. 8) there is a sentence: “The pattern of Heaven and the pattern of the Earth, the Wuluo and the two lights, the ecliptic and the celestial equator, the Five Grand mountains (of Chinese topography) and hundreds of rivers. It seems that Wuluo in this context means the five planets. In Foshuo guandìng jing 傳說灌頂經, an apocryphal Buddhist text dated to around the fourth or fifth century, the Buddha mentioned that the eight kinds of spiritual beings and the five rākṣasas spiritual beings 八部鬼神五羅 副鬼神 are constantly protecting his stūpa from being destroyed by vicious, demonic beings (T21, no. 1331, p. 513b). Rākṣasas are sometimes referred as the warders of Hell in the Buddhist context. It seems that the Great Kings of Wuluo here are more likely interpreted as the Great Kings of the Five Rākṣasas.
carry the warrant of the people’s record, to summon (the people). The prison demons are merciless. Before the appropriate day of death arrives, they force them to do evil in order to cause their lives to end more quickly. Those who have more merit, will have their lifespan increased and will have Counters (the three-day reckonings) added in their lifespan. Heaven will dispatch good deities to protect their persons, dispatching (the document) to Hell and remove their charges. They will be removed from death and have their life confirmed. After that they will be reborn in Heaven.61

2. “Whether people should be reborn to Heaven or fall into Hell, when they are on their deathbeds, they will be received to see either good or evil states of rebirth”62

Whether people are reborn to Heaven or fall into Hell, there are (spirit) men waiting to receive them in one and the other respectively. When people are ill and almost dead, they see them (spirit men) come to receive them spontaneously. The celestial men bring celestial clothing to those who are supposed to be reborn in Heaven, and come to receive them with music entertainers. Those who are supposed to be reborn in the other region see the venerated one address marvellous sayings. Those who are supposed to fall into Hell see soldiers surround them, holding knives, shields, spears, lances and ropes. What they see is different and they cannot say a word. Each gets their reward or retribution according to what they have done. Heaven never acts wrongly; it is nothing but fair and even. Heaven determines their guilt in accordance with what they have done.63

Juan 2 of Jingdu sanmei jing (ll. 49–73), based on Nanatsu-dera ms full version of incomplete B. 822

The Days of the Eight Kings: from the day before the Days of the Eight Kings, men and women (should) reside separately and observe the Ten Rules until midnight of the day after the abstinence has finished. The reason for doing so is that Indra, the Four Guardian assistant ministers, the Director of Life-mandate mes-

61 Jinglü yixiang 經律異相 (T 53, no. 2121, p. 259c).
62 These two quotations are given separately under different titles on the same page of Jinglü yixiang. Each one includes a note stating that the quoted passage is from Jingdu sanmei jing.
63 Ibid., p. 259b–c.
senger would all descend, patrol and inspect the Stove God (7). On the right and left shoulders of humans, there are the left and right scribes. The divine man is on the left while the divine lady is on the right. The male spirit records the merits (of the person) while the female spirit records the wrongdoings. Before the end of midnight of the previous day, they ascend to Heaven to check and confirm the record of wrongdoings and merits together. They strive for respective responsibility and argue for the wrongdoings and merits of people without making the slightest mistake. Even the devas also have their lives ended, so the register is recorded clearly in detail. The Lord of Stove and the left and right scribes, holding what was recorded during the Nine Abstinences, recheck the result made by the Four (Celestial) Kings in order to learn whether they match or not. The revision takes three days. This is the basis for the decision as to whether people live or die. After being punished and reproached, the matter is settled and they are allowed to wait for a return (?). Those who have committed many crimes have their lifespan decreased and Counters (three-day reckonings) taken away. The article (of punishment) is to be sentenced to death, according to the allotted time, day, month and year of the date of their death. The documents are to be dispatched to Hell. When the (administration) of Hell receives the document, they dispatch the prison demons, who carry the warrant of the people’s record to summon them. The prison demons are merciless. Before the appropriate day of death arrives, the demons follow you and do not let you go far. They force you to do evil in order to cause your life to end more quickly. Maybe five years, one year, one hundred days, one month, ten days, three days or one day. Those who are sinful and evil are controlled by the demons and take reckless and illegal action. Little by little, closer and closer, they get to the land of death; their days of longevity being ended more rapidly. Those who have more merits have their lifespan increased and have Counters (the three-day reckonings) added in their lifespan. Heaven dispatches good deities to protect their persons. Their registers and documents are dispatched to Hell to eradicate their charges. They are removed from death and have their life confirmed. Then they are able to ascend to Heaven and are praised by the devas. Whether people are reborn in Heaven or fall into Hell, there are (spirit) men waiting to receive them in

64 The meaning of this sentence is not clear.
one and the other respectively. When people are ill and almost
dead, they see them (spirit men) come to receive them spontane-
ously. The celestial men bring celestial clothing to those who are
supposed to be reborn in the Heaven, and come to receive them
with music entertainers. Those who are to be reborn to the other
region see the venerated one address marvelous sayings. Those
who are to fall into Hell see soldiers holding knives, shields, spears,
lances and ropes surrounding them. What they see is different and
they cannot say a word. They get their own reward or retribution
according to what they did. Those who commit trivial crimes will
be punished. Their souls will be arrested and they will receive
punishment. They will soon be ill. The number of days (of their
illness) are different from each other and the degree of severity of
illness is different. The office that is attached to each case is differ-
ent. It depends on how their actions are classified. Heaven never
acts wrongly. It is nothing but fair and even. Heaven determines
their guilt in accordance with what they have done.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| HY  | Weng Dujian 翁獨健, Daozang zimu yinde 道藏子目引得 |
| T   | Taishō shinshū daizōkyō (Taishō Tripitaka) 大正新脩大藏経 |