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## Scripture-telling (*jiangjing*) in the Zhangjiagang Area and the History of Chinese Storytelling

### INTRODUCTION

Scripture-telling (*jiangjing* 講經)<sup>1</sup> has recently attracted considerable attention among scholars in China and abroad. It is a kind of storytelling that survives today mainly in two areas of Jiangsu – Jingjiang 靖江 (a county-level city under the jurisdiction of Taizhou 泰州) and Zhangjiagang 張家港 (a county-level city under Suzhou 蘇州; see appended map). Scripture-telling implies predominantly religious subjects and is connected with written texts, called *baojuan* 寶卷 (precious scrolls).<sup>2</sup> Major specialists on *baojuan* texts in China and in the West, Che Xilun 車錫倫 and Daniel L. Overmyer, worked out the conception of three periods in the history of *baojuan* literature.<sup>3</sup> During the initial period (14th–15th centuries), *baojuan* propagated popularized Buddhist doctrines. In the early period (16th–18th centuries), *baojuan* were usually used as the scriptures of sects.<sup>4</sup> There is also evidence that these so-called sectarian *baojuan* did not supplant the performance of popular

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<sup>1</sup> “Scripture-telling” seems to be the best translation, since performed texts are connected with a variety of religious traditions. However, the art probably originated in the practice of Buddhist sūtra lecturing; see below.

<sup>2</sup> Often abbreviated to “scroll” in the titles of texts. Other names, such as scripture (*jing*), liturgy (*keyi* 科儀) are used to designate texts, which are included in the corpus of *baojuan* texts; see Che Xilun 車錫倫, *Zhongguo baojuan zongmu* 中國寶卷總目 (Beijing: Yanshan shuju, 2000), pp. vii–viii.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel L. Overmyer, *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1999), pp. 4, 34; Che Xilun, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule: Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu ji qita* 信仰, 教化, 娛樂: 中國寶卷研究及其它 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 2002), pp. 2–3.

<sup>4</sup> Sects (more precisely folk secret religions), which flourished in the 16th–17th centuries, promised followers passage to the paradise of the deity-progenitor Eternal Venerable Mother (Wusheng lao mu 無生老母). Most *baojuan* propagated her cult. From the founding of the Qing dynasty in 1644 the state started severe persecutions of the sects, thus implying the confiscation and destruction of *baojuan*.

Buddhist tales, similar to the texts of the first period. Che Xilun has demonstrated that *baojuan* with Buddhist subjects continued to develop in the 15th–17th centuries.<sup>5</sup> This kind of text developed rapidly in the late period (19th–20th centuries). At that time most *baojuan* were not connected with sectarian teachings. Texts, which narrated biographies of saints, and even texts with secular subjects predominated.

Texts of *baojuan* were intended for recitation during religious meetings. The art of this recitation is known under different names: scripture-telling and scroll recitation (*xuanjuan* 宣卷, or *nianjuan* 念卷).<sup>6</sup> In the second part of the 20th century, it was generally accepted that the art of scroll recitation, once popular in many areas of China, was already extinct. Scroll recitation disappeared in many areas due to the government campaigns against folk religious activities. Since the 1980s, however, information on *baojuan* performance traditions still existing in several regions of China became available. Today the most famous tradition is scripture-telling in Jingjiang.<sup>7</sup>

Scroll recitation also survived in several areas of North China; it still exists in the western areas of Gansu province (the so-called Hexi 河西, or West of the Yellow River, area).<sup>8</sup> Scroll recitation is also performed nowadays in some regions of Hebei province. Unlike scroll recitation in Jiangsu and Gansu, which continues the late period in the history of the *baojuan* genre, the performances in Hebei are connected mainly with originally sectarian texts (related to those of the second period of *baojuan* history). For example, in Southern Gaoluo 南高絡 village, Laishui 涑水 county, the only preserved text in performance –

<sup>5</sup> Che Xilun 車錫倫, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu* 中國寶卷研究 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2009), pp. 90–139.

<sup>6</sup> The first two seem to be used mainly in South China (modern Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, generally known as Jiangnan region), the third one is used in North China.

<sup>7</sup> Scripture-telling in Jingjiang was discovered by Duan Baolin 段寶林, professor of Beijing University, in the 1980s. It soon attracted the attention of Chinese and foreign scholars, who went to Jingjiang and researched performances; e.g., Elvira S. Stulova (Russian Academy of Sciences), “Prostonarodnaia pesenno-povestvovatel’naia literatura v KNR,” *Obschestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae* 22.3 (Moscow, 1991), pp. 179–84; Mark Bender, “A Description of ‘Jiangjing’ (Telling Scriptures) Services in Jingjiang, China,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 60 (2001) 1, pp. 101–33. On Jingjiang scripture-telling, see also Che Xilun, “Jiangsu Jingjiang de zuohui jiangjing” 江蘇靖江的做會講經, in his *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu lunji* 中國寶卷研究論集 (Taipei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1997), pp. 131–64; reprinted in *ZJB* 2, pp. 1633–44; Lu Yongfeng 陸永峰 and Che Xilun, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu* 靖江寶卷研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Tan Chanxue 譚蟬雪, “Hexi de *baojuan*” 河西的寶卷, *Dunhuang yuyan wenxue yanjiu tongxun* 敦煌語言文學研究通訊 1 (1986), pp. 11–15; Duan Ping 段平, *Hexi baojuan de diaocha yanjiu* 河西寶卷的調查研究 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 1992); Fang Buhe 方不和, ed., *Hexi baojuan zhen ben jiaozhu yanjiu* 河西寶卷真本校註研究 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 1992).

*Baojuan of the Earth-Empress* (*Houtu baojuan* 后土寶卷) – presumably had a sectarian origin, but now is performed outside of sectarian contexts.<sup>9</sup> From the point of view of contents and form, *Baojuan of the Earth-Empress* belongs to the early period of the genre history. In Ding 定 county there are a number of *baojuan* recited by followers of the Vast Yang Teaching (Hongyangjiao 弘陽教), a sect founded at the end of the sixteenth century that has continued its activities until now.<sup>10</sup>

Because of this newly available material, the study of *baojuan* and their recitation has taken a new turn: from purely textual research to the rise in studies of actual performances. In several areas, living *baojuan* recitation traditions were proclaimed “an intangible cultural heritage” (*fei wuzhi wenhua yichan* 非物質文化遺產),<sup>11</sup> and with government support the work to preserve performances has been done. In these places scholars recorded performances and published related texts. Two massive collections of texts from Zhangjiagang<sup>12</sup> and Jingjiang pertinent to this study (*Zhongguo Heyang baojuan ji* and *Zhongguo Jingjiang baojuan*; see List of Abbreviations, below) have been published recently. They make the recited texts very accessible, though heavy editing by local scholars suggests that they should be used with caution.

In regard to this fact, the concrete information on the performances of these texts (especially less studied ones from Zhangjiagang) presented in this paper becomes especially relevant. Here I mainly focus not on the contents of texts transmitted in Zhangjiagang, but on the characteristics of their performance.

Although some work has been done to introduce scripture-telling texts and performances in the Zhangjiagang area, they remain less studied than other traditions of *baojuan* recitation and unknown in Western scholarship. Zhangjiagang scripture-telling, however, deserves detailed research, because it possesses marked differences compared with simi-

<sup>9</sup> Xue Yibin 薛艺兵, “Hebei Yixian, Laishui de ‘Houtu *baojuan*’” 河北易县·涑水的《后土宝卷》, *Yinyue yishu – Shanghai yinyue xueyuan xuebao* 音乐艺术-上海音乐学院学报 2000 (2), pp. 31–37; Xue Yibin, *Shensheng de yule: Zhongguo minjian jisi yishi ji qi yinyue de renlei xue yanjiu* 神聖的娛樂：中國民間祭祀儀式及其音樂的人類學研究 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2003), pp. 319–67; Stephen Jones, *Plucking the Winds: Lives of Village Musicians in Old and New China* (Leiden: CHIME Foundation, 2004), pp. 243–306.

<sup>10</sup> Dong Xiaoping 董晓萍 and David K. Arkush 欧达伟, *Xiangcun xiqu biaoyan yu Zhongguo xiandai minzhong* 乡村戏曲表演与中国现代民众 (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2000), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Scripture-telling in Jingjiang was awarded this title of provincial level in 2007, scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang – city level in 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Formerly part of Changshu 常熟 county, Jiangsu (note its ancient names – Yuxiang 虞鄉 and Haiyu 海虞). Local scholars designated Zhangjiagang scripture-telling texts as “Heyang 河陽 *baojuan*” after the the mountain where scripture-telling was widespread.

lar traditions in China. In this article I attempt to demonstrate which elements in Zhangjiagang scripture-telling have commonalities with other traditions and what its special features are. I compare Zhangjiagang scripture-telling mainly to that in adjacent Jingjiang city (situated just across the Yangtse River). Significantly, scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang both represent branches of Suzhou-area scroll recitation.<sup>13</sup> Both are performed in certain forms of the Wu 吳 topolect (spoken in Jiangnan).<sup>14</sup> In scripture-telling in Jingjiang, what is used is “the old bank language” (*lao an hua* 老岸話), an archaic form of speech of Suzhou settlers. Zhangjiagang performances are in “the speech of Changshu [county]” (*Changshu hua* 常熟話), also called “the topolect of [places] to the west of Yu” (*Yu xi fangyan* 虞西方言).<sup>15</sup> I pay special attention to the different balance of oral and written aspects in scripture-telling when comparing Zhangjiagang with Jingjiang. These two traditions are very different in the use of scripts for the performances. The materials of Zhangjiagang scripture-telling may help to enrich our knowledge of *baojuan* performances in Jiangsu province in recent times, as well as redefine the place and meaning of this genre in the history of Chinese storytelling.

## SOURCES

I use materials obtained during my two short visits to Zhangjiagang on November 2–6, 2008, and April 14–16, 2009. During my first stay I had opportunities to listen and record on video the performance of [*Precious*] *Scroll of Mulian* (*Mulian juan* 目連卷), made in turn by five storytellers – “masters of scripture-telling” (*jiangjing xiansheng* 講經先生).<sup>16</sup> They performed in the Center for Recreational and Cultural Activities of the Gangkou area community of Fenghuang town (Fenghuang zhen Gangkou shequ wenti fuwu zhongxin 鳳凰鎮港口社區文體服務中心) on November 3, 2008.

During my second visit, I witnessed performances of scripture-telling in ritual settings during two temple festivals. They took place

<sup>13</sup> Jingjiang was originally an island in the Yangtse whose first settlers came from the Suzhou area; thus their descendants preserve a form of Wu-topolect, which is different from the speech of neighboring counties. Jingjiang is the only Wu-topolect area north of Yangtse.

<sup>14</sup> This concerns primarily pronunciation, especially in Zhangjiagang tradition. Written texts of *baojuan* in both places use mainly standard northern vernacular, with numerous elements of classical Chinese and topolect words.

<sup>15</sup> ZHBJ 1, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Yu Guanbao 虞關保 (b. 1930), Hu Zhengxing 胡正興 (b. 1934), female master Zhang Yongyin 張詠吟 (b. 1939), Master Lu 陸先生 (b. 1941), and Master Jin 金先生 (b. 1955).

at the temple of Deity Gao 高神<sup>17</sup> and the temple of Deity Liu 劉神<sup>18</sup> in Qingshui 清水 and Shuangtang 雙塘 villages of Fenghuang town on April 15 and 16, respectively. I employ mainly the material of the first occasion. During the festival at the temple of Deity Gao, five storytellers participated in the performance: Zhang Yongyin, her daughter Jiang Jianmei 蔣健梅 (b. 1965), Qian Jianguo 錢建國,<sup>19</sup> Zhou Yongcai 周永財 (b. 1951), and Ma Xiangbao 馬祥保. They performed six texts: *Scroll of [Guanyin] in White Robes* (*Bai yi juan* 白衣卷), *Scroll of the Pipa* (*Pipa juan* 琵琶卷), *Scroll of Deity Gao* (*Gao shen juan*), *Scroll of the Stove Emperor* (*Zao huang juan* 竈皇卷), *Scroll of the God of Wealth* (*Cai shen juan* 財神卷), and *Eight Immortals Wishing Longevity [Scroll]* (*Ba xian shang shou* 八仙上壽).

Providing facts on the ritual setting of the performances were several storytellers themselves: Yu Guanbao 虞闕保 and Hu Zhengxing 胡正興, who participated in the performance of *Scroll of Mulian*, Zhang Yongyin 張詠吟 and her husband (not a storyteller, but a helper to his

<sup>17</sup> Deity Gao has two historical prototypes. One is Gao Huaide 高懷德 (926–982), who was a famous general and brother-in-law of the founder of the Song dynasty (960–1279), Zhao Kuangyin (Taizu, r. 960–976); see Tuotuo 脫脫 (1313–1355) et al., eds., *Song shi* 宋史, in *Ershi-wu shi* (*Biaodian ben*) 二十五史 (標點本) (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1996) 8/250, p. 1160. According to a local legend, Gao Huaide was awarded land in Changshu county and lived there. *Scroll of Deity Gao* is dedicated to the activities of Gao Huaide. However, there is also the second prototype – another famous Song-dynasty general Gao Qiong 高瓊 (935–1006). Gao Qiong was known for his military deeds and honesty; see *Song shi*, 8/289, pp. 1336–37; Li Tao 李燾 (1115–1184), *Xu Zi zhi tong jian chang pian* 續資治通鑑長篇 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986) 1/63, pp. 549–50. Authors of a Changshu county gazetteer wrote that two temples of Deity Gao in Gangkou town were dedicated to Gao Qiong: Pang Hongwen 龐鴻文 (*jinshi* 1876) et al., *Chongxiu Chang-Zhao he zhi gao* 重修常昭合志稿 in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu: Hua zhong difang* 中國方志叢書: 華中地方 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1974), 153 (rpt. of 1904 edn.) 3/16, p. 845. According to *Scroll of Deity Gao*, Gao Huaide was awarded the title of Righteous and Martial King (Liewu wang 烈武王): *ZHBJ* 1, p. 125, by which he is known in the Zhangjiagang area. According to official historiography, Gao Huaide did not have this title. Righteous and Martial King was the title of Gao Qiong, which was awarded posthumously in 1076; see “Gao Liewu wang Qiong shendao bei” 高烈武王瓊神道碑 in Wang Gui 王珪 (*jinshi* 1042) *Huayang ji* 華陽集, Wang Yunwu 王雲五, ed., *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1935) 1011–5/35, p. 471. Apparently these two figures merged into the image of Deity Gao. The notion, in the Zhangjiagang collection of *baojuan*, that Gao Huaide and Gao Qiong were the same person and Huaide was the style name of Gao Qiong (*ZHBJ* 2, p. 1479) is an obvious mistake.

<sup>18</sup> It is another name of Fierce General Liu (Liu Mengjiang 劉猛將), an agricultural deity, probably a deified historical person, who is efficacious against locust invasions. Several figures are listed as his prototypes, but the most probable are a Song dynasty general Liu Qi 劉錡 (1098–1162) or his younger brother (?) Liu Rui 劉銳; see Che Xilun and Zhou Zhengliang 周正良, “Qu huang shen Liu Mengjiang de laili he liubian” 驅蝗神劉猛將的來歷和流變 *Zhongguo minjian wenhua* 中國民間文化 1995 (5), pp. 1–3. The cult of General Liu was especially popular in the Suzhou area. On his Jiangnan cult, see Richard von Glahn 王志英, “Taihu pendi minjian zongjiao de shehuixue yanjiu” 太湖盆地民間宗教的社會學研究, transl. by Wang Xiangyun 王湘云, in Li Bozhong 李伯重 and Zhou Shengchun 周生春, eds., *Jiangnan de chengshi gongye yu difang wenhua* (960–1850) 江南的城市工業與地方文化 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 2004), pp. 305–7.

<sup>19</sup> Qian Jianguo is a son of famous master of scripture-telling Qian Xiaoyan 錢筱彥 (b. 1932).

wife in copying and editing *baojuan*) during a visit to their home, Di Jianxin 狄建新 (b. 1928) (also during a visit to his home), and his daughter Di Qiuyan 狄秋燕 (b. 1963), as well as a local scholar of folklore Yu Yongliang 虞永良. Yu Yongliang also assisted me with the pictures and video records of scripture-telling in a traditional setting, which took place during the festival in the Guanyin temple of Dongnan 東南 village in fall of 2004, and during funerals in a peasant's home in Qianjing 錢涇 village (both in Fenghuang town) in September of 2006.<sup>20</sup> Di Jianxin and Di Qiuyan kindly provided the partial audio records of their recent performances of *Scroll of Xiangshan* and *Scroll of the Ten Kings*. Yu Yongliang demonstrated his collection of *baojuan* manuscripts (copies and originals), which he has collected from storytellers since the 1980s (altogether 166, including similar titles). Di Jianxin and Di Qiuyan also showed their collection of texts (326 items, altogether 208 different titles).<sup>21</sup>

For comparison I use material published recently by Chinese scholars working on scripture-telling performances in several areas of Changshu county, to which the greater part of Zhangjiagang originally belonged.<sup>22</sup> Che Xilun has argued that scripture-telling in the Gangkou and Shanghu 尚湖 area of Changshu are branches of the same tradition.<sup>23</sup> *Baojuan* performances also exist in the Baimao area, and are called scroll recitation there. The Baimao tradition of performances seems to have stopped during the persecution of religious activities there in the 1950s, but was revived in the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> In this aspect the Zhangjiagang tradition seems to be more authentic than the Baimao one, as, according to the informants' claims, the former one never stopped.

As for the materials concerning the Jingjiang tradition, I observed a scripture-telling session there in the private home of the Wang family in Xinhua 新華 village of Xieqiao 斜橋 town on April 13, 2009, with the help of city cultural bureau scholars Yao Fupei 姚富培, Wu Genyuan 吳根元, and others. I also used information from fieldwork reports published by Chinese scholars.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Scroll of Xiangshan* (i.e. Fragrant Mountain, *Xiangshan juan* 香山卷) and *Scroll of the Ten Kings* (*Shi wang juan* 十王卷) respectively.

<sup>21</sup> Only shortened lists of titles in Yu Yongliang's and Di Jianxin's collections (63 and 74 items respectively) are published in the collection: *ZHBJ* 2, pp. 1492–97.

<sup>22</sup> Che, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 401–14; Qiu Huiying 丘慧瑩, “Jiangsu Changshu Baimao diqu xuan juan huodong diaocha baogao 江蘇常熟白茆地區宣卷活動調查報告,” *Minsu quyi* 民俗曲藝 169 (2010.9), pp. 183–247.

<sup>23</sup> Che, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, p. 404.

<sup>24</sup> Qiu, “Baimao diqu xuan juan,” pp. 192, 196.

<sup>25</sup> Primarily Yu Yongliang, “Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao” 河陽寶卷調查報告, *Min-*

First, I will demonstrate common features of Jingjiang and Zhangjiagang scripture-telling, and then particularities of the Zhangjiagang tradition.

#### REPertoire: TYPES OF TEXTS AND MEETINGS

*Baojuan* performed in Zhangjiagang are traditionally classified into three categories by storytellers themselves: 1. sacred scrolls (*shen juan* 神卷, or *sheng juan* 聖卷, or Buddhist scrolls [*fo juan* 佛卷]), 2. secular scrolls (*fan juan* 凡卷), 3. and liturgies (*keyi* 科儀). The names themselves reveal differences in content. The first two categories belong to the narrative type, while the third one represents the scriptural type. The name of the third type comes from the similar ritual texts found in Buddhist and Daoist traditions, from which it apparently originated. Liturgies are usually performed at religious meetings of special meaning (see below). They usually include invocations of deities and prayers for forgiveness of sins and bestowal of benefits of all kinds, depending on text and occasion. Sacred scrolls deal with stories of Buddhist and popular deities/saints,<sup>26</sup> while secular scrolls tell stories borrowed from novels, dramas,<sup>27</sup> and other popular types of local storytelling. String lyrics (*tanci* 彈詞), widespread in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces,<sup>28</sup> and drum lyrics (*guci* 鼓詞) widespread in the old days in North China, are the most frequent sources of such narrative material. In spite of the name of this type of text, the contents of these *baojuan* are not purely secular. Stories are usually put into the frame of religious ideas of retribution. There is also another sub-category adjoined to secular scrolls called small scrolls (*xiao juan* 小卷, or leisure scrolls, *xian juan* 閑卷). Those narrate folk legends, including tales about animals. While sacred

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*su quy* 110 (1997), pp. 67–88; Che Xilun, “Jiangsu Zhangjiagang Gangkou zhen de zuohui jiangjing (diaocha baogao)” 江蘇張家港口鎮的做會講經 (調查報告), in his *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, pp. 195–209; revised version in *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 385–401. As will be demonstrated below, some conclusions of local scholars do not seem to be reliable and should be reconsidered.

<sup>26</sup> Despite the Buddhist name, stories of indigenous deities predominate. Furthermore, most texts concentrate on the earthly life of protagonists before their sainthood. Therefore, much local lore appears in the form of sacred scrolls – similar to the Jingjiang tradition: Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, p. 46. Religious ideology is characterized by syncretism of varied beliefs, including Buddhist, Daoist, and sectarian. Nevertheless, we will see that most technical terms used in the scripture-telling tradition in Zhangjiagang have a Buddhist origin.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., the above-mentioned *Scroll of Pipa*, which retells the famous drama *Pipa ji* by Gao Ming (fl. 1345). See Jean Mulligan, transl., *The Lute: Kao Ming's Pi-p'a chi* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1980).

<sup>28</sup> Also known as Suzhou chantefable; see Mark Bender, *Plum and Bamboo: China's Suzhou Chantefable Tradition* (Urbana: Illinois U.P., 2003), p. 3.

and secular scrolls are written in the style of prose and verse alternation (prosimetric),<sup>29</sup> many small scrolls (whose length may be more than 2,000 lines) are entirely in verse, and thus performed completely sung. Small scrolls have obvious entertainment quality, and are usually inserted at the beginning to get the audience into the mood for performance, and also at the end, in order to relax.<sup>30</sup>

*Baojuan* performers in Baimao also divide their repertoire into main (*zheng* 正) and subsidiary, entertainment (*bai xiang* 白相) scrolls, “big” and “small” scrolls from the point of contents; however, unlike masters of scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang, they now rarely perform *baojuan* with secular contents.<sup>31</sup>

Classification of texts in Zhangjiagang corresponds to the that of Jingjiang *baojuan*. Those are also divided into sacred (or main) scrolls (*sheng juan* 聖卷, *zheng juan* 正卷), worldly (or small) scrolls (*cao juan* 草卷, *xiao juan* 小卷), and liturgies.<sup>32</sup> Texts of pure versicular form do not seem to exist in Jingjiang, judging by the published collection of texts and scholars’ reports.

The performance of scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang takes place at special religious meetings (*zuohui* 做會). In what follows, I first describe the traditional, pre-1950s, situation surrounding such meetings – a situation that differs from the present one. Then I provide notes about the present time.<sup>33</sup>

Traditionally, important occasions for performance were the temple festivals (*miao hui* 廟會). The most important of those were:

- the memorial days of Yuzhong 虞仲<sup>34</sup> on the 3rd and 22nd days of

<sup>29</sup> Prose and verse parts are recited and sung respectively. In Zhangjiagang, 7-syllable meter (sometimes extra syllables may be added) is most common in *baojuan* verses. In sacred scrolls, 7-syllable verses are often labeled as *ji* (Skt. *gāthā*). 5- and 10-syllable verses, as well as irregular verses (usually called hymns, *zan* 讚, Skt. *stava*, *stotra*), are also used.

<sup>30</sup> *ZHB* 1, p. V.

<sup>31</sup> Qiu, “Baimao diqu xuan juan,” pp. 216–17.

<sup>32</sup> *ZJB* 2, 1640–41.

<sup>33</sup> My description of religious meetings with scripture-telling in the Zhangjiagang area is by no means exhaustive. I only present a few main types; a large variety of other types of meetings, rituals, and corresponding texts are also to be found there.

<sup>34</sup> Yuzhong was worshipped in Changshu as the ancestor of local people. Yuzhong (or more correctly Zhongyong 仲雍) was a second son of a king of Zhou and an uncle of King Wen of Zhou. Together with his elder brother Taibo 太伯 he abandoned his right to power and moved to the south. Yuzhong (under this name) is mentioned in several classics and histories: *Lunyu* 論語 (Ma Xinmin 馬辛民 and Li Xueqin 李學勤, eds., *Shisan jing zhushu* [Biaodian ben] 十三經注疏 [標點本] [Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999]) 10/18, p. 252; *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳 (*Shisan jing zhushu* edn.) 7/12, p. 343; 8/58, p. 1641; Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–86 B.C.E.), *Shi ji* 史記 (*Ershiwu shi* edn.) 1/4, p. 7; 1/31, p. 70; 1/39, p. 90; 1/47, p. 124; Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) et al., *Han shu* 漢書 (*Ershiwu shi* edn.) 1/28/2, p. 111. According



- the 3rd lunar month;<sup>35</sup>
- the festival of Buddha bathing (*Yu fo hui* 裕佛會) on the 8th day of the 4th month;
  - the festival of City[-wall] God (*Chenghuang hui* 城隍會) on the 28th day of the 6th month; and
  - the festival of Shangxiang (*Shangxiang hui* 上相會) on the 25th day of the 7th month.

On these days special ceremonies were performed, such as the tour of inspection (*chuxun* 出巡) by Chenghuang and moving statues of deities to the main temple. Temple fairs were also held. Scripture-telling took place outside temples, under temporary sheds, which provided space for the table with offerings and the audience.

Furthermore, peasants held special communal religious meetings (*she hui* 社會), which required scripture-telling. They were usually related to natural events and agricultural activities. These were festivals of green sprouts (*qing miao she* 青苗社 or spring celebrations, *chun she* 春社), dedicated to popular agriculture deities such as General Liu (also called Shangxiang laoye 上相老爺), Li Tai laoye 蠡太老爺, and so forth. Festivals of green sprouts were expected to bring good harvest and prosperity. They were related to the worship of correspondent deities in local temples as well.

During the so-called Festivals of the Great Peace (*tai ping hui* 太平會, also called festivals of candle fire, *huo zhu hui* 火燭會), deities of the water and fire realms such as Stove God (*Zao wang* 竈王), Dragon King (*Long wang* 龍王), and Jin [family] Lads (*Jin tong* 金童)<sup>36</sup> were worshipped. Offerings to the corresponding deities as well as scripture-telling in their honor were expected to bring safety from fire and flood, major peasant disasters, respectively. Furthermore, there was a custom to hold a communal Buddhist meeting (*Dajia Fo hui* 大家佛會), which met an entire village's responsibility to pray for peace and fortune.

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to the hypothesis of Fan Chengda 範成大 (1126–1193), Yuzhong was the name given later to this person after the name of the place allotted to his descendant, see his *Wu qun zhi* 吳郡志 in *Jiangsu difang wenxian congshu* 江蘇地方文獻叢書 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe), pp. 627–28. Local histories say that Yuzhong settled in Changshu and was buried on Yu 虞 (or Wumu 烏目) Mountain there: Pang et al., *Chongxiu Chang-Zhao he zhi gao*, 1/2, p. 48; 4/22, p. 1265; Zhang Jinghuan 張鏡寰 et al., *Chongxiu Chang-Zhao he zhi* 重修常昭合志 (lithogr. edn., 1949) j. 1, p. 1a; j. 2, pp. 1a–b.

<sup>35</sup> Known as the Changshu and Heyang festivals (*Changshu hui* 常熟會, *Heyang hui* 河陽會). They included the worship of the Yuzhong (Ancestor) spirit in the Ancestor temples (*Zushi miao* 祖師廟), located on Yu and Heyang mountains, see below.

<sup>36</sup> Also called Chief Supervisors (*Zong guan* 總管). According to the legend retold in *baojuan*, these were local heroes who fought with foreign invaders during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644): *ZHB* 1, pp. 131–34. Jin Lads are popular deities in the Jiangnan region. Stories about their origin varied: Hamashima, *Ming Qing Jiangnan nongcun*, pp. 15–26.

During communal celebrations, the expenses for offerings and payment for storytellers were distributed among community members. In case of major temple celebrations the organization relied upon the associations of believers (*xiang hui* 香會). During village celebrations, peasant families paid expenses in turn. The green sprout festivals usually took place twice a year (thus known as spring and fall festivals – *chun she* and *qiu she* 秋社), and the communal Buddhist meeting took place once a year.

Scripture-telling was also connected with pilgrimages, which local believers undertook to the sacred places of Suzhou, Hangzhou, and Putuo and Jiuhua mountains (usually in the form of fulfilling a vow, or *huan yuan* 還願). At that time, temporary pilgrims' associations were formed. Scripture-telling took place on the road (often in the boats that pilgrims traveled in). Organized long-distance pilgrimages seem to have become rare long ago. However, their simplified form was preserved in the local pilgrimage to Yu Mountain, place of Yuzhong's burial and temple dedicated to him, on the 3rd day of the 3rd month, called "burning incense" (*bai xiang* 拜香).<sup>37</sup> After offerings in the temple, pilgrims listened to scripture-telling right in the mountain forest. According to Yu Yongliang's information, pilgrimages to Yu Mountain became rare after the 1950s.<sup>38</sup>

One should note that the special occasions listed above required performance of corresponding texts. During the festivals of green sprouts the following were recited: *Scroll of Liu [Mengjiang] Deity* (*Liu shen juan* 劉神卷), *Scroll of Master Guan [Yu]* (*Guan ye juan* 關爺卷), *Scroll of General [Liu] (Mengjiang juan)*, and *Scroll of Earth God* (*Tudi juan* 土地卷). However, the scripture-telling session was not limited to the recitation of two or three texts. Usually quite a large number of texts was performed.

Festivals of Great Peace required recitation of *Scroll of Eight Immortals* (*Ba xian juan* 八仙卷), *Scroll of White Dragon* (*Bai long juan* 白龍卷), *Scroll of Jin Lads* (*Jin tong juan*), and *Scroll of Stove God*. For the communal Buddhist meeting storytellers usually performed *Scroll of Xiangshan*.<sup>39</sup> The worship of Yuzhong included recitation of *Scroll of Repayment for Mercies* (*Bao en juan* 報恩卷) and *Scroll of Ancestor* (*Zushi juan* 祖師卷).

<sup>37</sup> For the description of different activities during this pilgrimage, see Wu Shuangre 吳雙熱 (ca. 1889–before 1938), *Haiyu fengsu ji* 海虞風俗記 in *Zhongguo fengtu zhi congkan* 中國風土志叢刊 (rpt. of 1916 edn.; Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2003) 32, pp. 23–25.

<sup>38</sup> Yu, "Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao," p. 74.

<sup>39</sup> It deals with the apocryphal story of Bodhisattva Guanyin's rebirth as Princess Miaoshan, so also called *Scroll of Guanyin*. For an English translation of the compact redaction of this

In years gone by, besides public celebrations, as above, scripture-telling also took place on private occasions, very often for funerals. Usually on the third day after death (one day before burial), storytellers recited *Scroll of the Ten Kings* and *Scroll of Hell* (*Diyu juan* 地獄卷), believed to save the soul of a deceased from suffering in hell and to provide a better rebirth. In the case of *Scroll of the Ten Kings*, offerings to the Ten Courts of Hell (*jiao dian* 醮殿, *zhaigong Shi wang* 齋供十王) were performed in order to ask for mercy of the ten judges who governed hells.<sup>40</sup> The main storyteller told about each court, and didactic stories were inserted in the narrative.<sup>41</sup> Then the assisting storyteller led relatives of the deceased to kneel in front of the soul tablet, recited ritual formulas, and burned certificates of barrier passage (*tong guan wendie* 通關文碟).<sup>42</sup> These were documents which certified that the sins of deceased were redeemed, and the soul would pass quickly through each hall. When *Scroll of Hell* was recited, heirs knelt and prayed for the soul's salvation eighteen times as it passed each of the eighteen hells.<sup>43</sup> In the case of a male, *Scroll of Seven Sevenths* (*Qi qi juan* 七七卷), or *Regulations of Lights in Nine Hells* (*Jiu you deng ke* 九幽登科) was added. (A memorial day on each seventh day after death is called a "seventh".) For females, *Scroll of the Pool of Blood* (*Xue hu juan* 血湖卷), or *Scroll of Mulian* was added. The two latter texts were connected with the ritual of breaking the Pool of Blood (*po xue hu* 破血湖).<sup>44</sup> Relatives usually invited Daoists to perform their funerary rituals following the scripture-telling session. Traditionally, recitation of texts dealing with hell also took place on set memorial days within the ritual forty-nine days – during the first, third, and fifth "seventh". Texts with hell sub-

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*baojuan*, see Wilt L. Idema trans. and intro., *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes* (Honolulu: Hawaii U.P., 2008); see also Glen Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miao-shan*, rev. edn. (New York: Oxford U.P., 2004), pp. 47-56; Chün-fang Yu, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2001), pp. 293-352.

<sup>40</sup> On the formation of the concept of the Ten Kings, see Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: Hawaii U.P., 1994).

<sup>41</sup> Yu, "Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao," p. 86. A version of this text is published under the title *Scroll of Kings of Underworld* (*Ming wang baojuan* 冥王寶卷): *ZHBĴ* 1, pp. 209-17 (notation for one verse accompanying offering to the kings is also published: *ZHBĴ* 2, p. 1457).

<sup>42</sup> As well as offerings to deities -- ritual money (*ming qian* 冥錢) and paper flowers. Ritual money imitates paper bills and silver bullions (*qian zhang yuan bao* 千張元寶).

<sup>43</sup> One version of this text has definite sectarian affiliations, see below.

<sup>44</sup> According to folk beliefs, a woman pollutes water and soil with her menstrual and child-birth blood. Therefore she is sentenced to suffer in the Pool of Blood after death. A special ceremony for purification is needed to save her from torments: usually a son drinks dyed water, symbolizing the Pool of Blood. The ritual of breaking the Pool of Blood is performed during female funerals in different regions of China. In most traditions this ritual is connected

jects were allowed up to the third year after a person's death. After that, memorial services, if held, used texts with other subjects, such as *Scroll of Xiangshan*.

Other personal occasions included birthday celebrations for elderly persons (*qing shou* 慶壽). Scripture-telling with the purpose of wishing longevity was usually held at first on the fiftieth anniversary of a person, and then took place every ten years. Similar scripture-telling was performed for sick people, whether old or young. Special texts, such as *Scripture of Extending Longevity for Male* (*Nan yan shou jing* 男延壽經), *Scripture of Extending Longevity for Female* (*Nü yan shou jing* 女延壽經), *Scroll of Extending Longevity of Taohua* (*Taohua yan shou juan* 桃花延壽卷), *Scroll of Eight Immortals Wishing Longevity*, *Scroll of Opening the Barrier* (*Kai guan juan* 開關卷), *Scroll of the Return of Life* (*Huan shou sheng juan* 還受生卷) were usually recited on these occasions. For sick people, masters of scripture-telling often performed the ritual of “warding-off the calamity star” (*tui xing* 退星, or *rang xing* 禳星), during which a special *Baojuan on Warding-off the Star* (*Tui xing baojuan*) was recited. Yu Yongliang mentions specific deities' cults related to personal welfare and texts dedicated to them and recited on private occasions: Monkey Deity (Hou xian 猴仙) and the Five Sages (Wu sheng 五聖)<sup>45</sup> with *Meeting of Curved Peaches* (*Pan tao hui* 蟠桃會),<sup>46</sup> *Scroll of Monkey King* (*Hou wang juan* 猴王卷), and *Baojuan of Reverend Grandma* (*Tai lao baojuan* 太姥寶卷), respectively.<sup>47</sup>

There was also the tradition of scripture-telling on the celebration of a baby's first birthday, which in old times meant he or she survived the first year. On that occasion, *Scroll of Untying Knots* (*Jie jie juan* 解結卷), *Scroll of Scattering Flowers* (*San hua juan* 散花卷), *Baojuan of Lotus Boat* (*Lian chuan baojuan* 蓮船寶卷), and *Scroll of Offering of Lotus Flowers and Primary Treasure* (*Xian lian hua yuan bao juan* 獻蓮花元寶卷, with “Primary Treasure” referring to ritual money) were recited. There was also the ceremony of the consecration of a newborn boy to a certain deity

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with the Buddhist story of Mulian, Buddha's disciple who rescued his sinful mother from hell. See Gary Seaman, “The Sexual Politics of Karmic Retribution,” in E. M. Ahern and H. Gates, eds., *Anthropology of Taiwanese Society* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1981), pp. 382–96; Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, pp. 171–94.

<sup>45</sup> This is another name for Wutong 五通, popular Jiangnan deities. On the growth of their cult, see Richard Von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> It deals with the story of Sun Wukong, well-known from the 16th century novel *Journey to the West*.

<sup>47</sup> Yu, “Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao,” p. 74.

in order to protect him, during which the scroll of the corresponding deity was recited.

In the preceding, we have seen that in the past local people had quite a variety of meetings, including both public and private. At present there are still temple and communal festivals in the Zhangjiagang area. Two meetings, which I witnessed in April 2009, belonged to the type of “green sprouts festivals.” At the same time both meetings were held on the eve of the major temple festival on Heyang mountain (22nd day of the 3rd month). I learned that nowadays scripture-telling does not take place on this day. As in the past, scripture-telling on private occasions occurs very often at funerals.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, there have been changes in the customs and rituals associated with these private meetings. Funerary scripture-telling usually is performed only once instead of the several meetings that corresponded to the periods of “sevenths”.<sup>49</sup> According to modern storytellers, relatives do not anymore drink water symbolizing the Pool of Blood during funerary scripture-telling in the Zhangjiagang area, as they used to. Only the relevant text is recited. Moreover, the time for longevity meetings was recently changed to the sixtieth anniversary, unlike the fiftieth, in previous years.

According to Qiu Huiying 丘慧瑩, in the Baimao area there are similar types of religious meetings with *baojuan* performances, as in the scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang: pilgrimages, funerals, birthday celebrations, rituals for protecting the welfare of a person or family (*bao jia* 保家). The main difference seems to be the absence of temple or community meetings in Baimao.<sup>50</sup>

At this point, let us make the same sort of comparison but focused on the organization of scripture-telling in Jingjiang, which was and is quite similar to that of the Zhangjiagang area. In the past in Jingjiang, scripture-telling also took place on public and private occasions, divided into temple festivals (*miao hui*), communal festivals (*gong hui* 公會), and private meetings (*si hui* 私會). Previously, scripture-telling dealing with specific deities (Three Mao 三茅,<sup>51</sup> Zitong 梓潼,<sup>52</sup> Guanyin, Bodhisat-

<sup>48</sup> For a description of funerary scripture-telling performed in November, 1996, see Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, pp. 200–9.

<sup>49</sup> Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, pp. 208–9.

<sup>50</sup> Qiu, “Baimao diqu xuan juan,” pp. 195–99, 202.

<sup>51</sup> Daoist immortals, see Ma Shutian 馬書田, *Zhongguo dao shen* 中國道神 (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 2006), pp. 112–13.

<sup>52</sup> Originally a local deity of Sichuan province, which later merged with astral deity Wenchang emperor 文昌大帝, see Ma Shutian, *Zhongguo su shen* 中國俗神 (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 2007), pp. 83–87; Terry F. Kleeman, *A God's Own Tale: The Book of Transformations of Wenchang, the Divine Lord of Zitong* (Albany: New York State U.P., 1994), pp. 1–84; Terry

tva Dizang 地藏,<sup>53</sup> Earth God, and so on) in Jingjiang was performed in connection with a deity's birthday celebration (*sheng dan* 聖誕) or temple activities (*xiang qi* 香期). Che Xilun also writes that communal scripture-telling seems to have substituted for pilgrimages to the most popular deities' sacred sites.<sup>54</sup> The vestiges of these practices are evident in the texts of *Baojuan of Three Mao* (*San mao baojuan* 三茅寶卷) and *Baojuan of Great Sage* (*Da sheng baojuan* 大聖寶卷),<sup>55</sup> performed in Jingjiang nowadays.<sup>56</sup>

Private occasions for scripture-telling in Jingjiang included old people's and children's birthday celebrations. These occasions required similar rituals as those in Zhangjiagang, mentioned above: offerings to the Ten Courts of hell (*jiao shi dian*) with recitation of *Scroll of Li Qing* (*Li Qing baojuan* 李清寶卷) and *Scroll of the Ten Kings* (a redaction different from the Zhangjiagang text); breaking the Pool of Blood, during which *Baojuan of the Pool of Blood* (*Xue hu baojuan* 血湖寶卷) was performed, and sons of a woman and their family members drank the blood bowl; returning of the symbolic money which the person borrowed from the underworld treasury at the time of birth – returning (money) to the department (*huan cao* 還曹); transmitting the fragrance (*chuan xiang* 傳香); wishing longevity (*bai shou* 拜壽); crossing barriers (*du guan* 度關); untying knots (*jie jie* 解結), and others.<sup>57</sup>

At present, scripture-telling in Jingjiang takes place only on private occasions. The above comparison of the two traditions has demonstrated that preservation of scripture-telling during temple celebrations constitutes the special feature of the Zhangjiagang tradition. This kind of *baojuan* performance does not exist in Jingjiang and Baimao now, mainly because of the destruction of temples during anti-religious campaigns in the 1950s. In Jingjiang now, private meetings for extending longevity (*yan sheng hui* 延生會) are quite popular. I witnessed one of this kind, held for extending longevity of the wife of the head of a family, aged sixty-seven, on April 13, 2009. This meeting included offerings

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F. Kleeman, "Sources For Religious Practice in Zitong: The Local Side of a National Cult," *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 10 (1998), pp. 341–55.

<sup>53</sup> Skt.: Kṣitigarbha; in China worshiped as the savior of souls from hell.

<sup>54</sup> *ZJB* 2, p. 1636.

<sup>55</sup> On the subjects of these texts, see Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 47–52, 57–62; Bender, "A Description of 'Jiangjing,'" pp. 121–29.

<sup>56</sup> Introductory verses in both texts say that scripture-telling substitutes pilgrimages to Lang and Mao mountains: Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 53, 143.

<sup>57</sup> *ZJB* 2, pp. 1637–38; Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 127–29. For the description of the offerings to the Ten Courts of hell, see Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, pp. 151–70. For crossing barriers, see Bender, "A Description of 'Jiangjing,'" pp. 114–18.

to the Ten Courts of Hell, breaking the Pool of Blood, and returning money to the department.

There is a difference between Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang in the ritual meaning of performances of texts dealing with hell. Unlike Zhangjiagang, nowadays in Jingjiang *Scroll of the Ten Kings* and *Baojuan of the Pool of Blood* are performed not on funerals, but on birthdays of old people. Performance has the same aim to redeem a person's sins. However, according to a certain Jingjiang *fotou*,<sup>58</sup> it is made for extending life, not for praying for future rebirth (*wang sheng* 往生).<sup>59</sup> In Jingjiang the *fotou* nowadays do not participate in funerary rites. Funerary rites, including the second breaking of the Pool of Blood at female funerals, are performed by Daoist priests. Inclusion of scripture-telling in funerary rites in Zhangjiagang may be the sign of a more archaic quality of this tradition when compared to that of Jingjiang. Funerary scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang is an equivalent of Buddhist and Daoist rites, from which it may have originated and with which it has been usually combined.

Having taken into consideration this comparison over time and between areas, next we turn to comments on the structure and settings of ritual in the present day, in both regions.

#### RITUAL SETTING

Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang is accompanied by special introductory and concluding rituals and paraphernalia, which seem to be similar with the Jingjiang tradition. There is a special place for performance, a scripture hall (*jing tang* 經堂, also called Buddha's platform, *fo tai* 佛台). During the communal and private meetings, it is usually set up in the main hall of the sponsor's house. During the festival of Deity Gao that I witnessed, the scripture hall was organized in a believer's house near the temple (scripture-telling also can take place inside a temple). Several tables were put together in order to provide space for offerings and for the storyteller with his assistants, who comprised the chorus.

On the wall opposite the entrance, storytellers will usually hang a picture, called the sacred image (*sheng xiang* 聖像). At the Deity Gao celebration, it was an image of the Longevity Star (Shouxing 壽星) (see

<sup>58</sup> *Fotou* (佛頭, lit. Buddha's head) is a special name for scripture-telling masters in Jingjiang. Apparently *fotou* originally meant a religious specialist and a head of a ritual meeting; see Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 120–21.

<sup>59</sup> Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 120, 444.

figure 1). The sacred image can represent different deities, such as Guanyin and Dizang. The image of Dizang is used for funerary scripture-telling.<sup>60</sup> Around the sacred images storytellers sometimes hang ritual banners (*manzhang* 幔帳). On the wall to the right of the sacred image, storytellers hang special envelopes for the memorial (*shutou* 疏頭) used in the meeting, called *shuke* 疏殼, *fengdai* 封袋, or *zhitao* 直套. At the festival at the Deity Gao's temple, leading storyteller Zhang Yongyin wrote the memorial on several long pieces of paper. In the memorial, the place, time, and purpose of the meeting (prayer for peace and fortune) were stated, as well the names of performers, number and titles of recited texts, and names and ages of the participants of the meeting. At the end of scripture-telling session, the lead storyteller recited the memorial in front of the sacred images and raised pieces with the lists of names as if demonstrating and reporting them to the deity. This ritual is called submission of the memorial (*tong shu* 通疏). After that, the memorial together with all ritual paraphernalia was burned in a special stove in the temple yard.

Small icons (literally, paper horses, *zhima* 紙馬) are placed in front of the big images.<sup>61</sup> These icons represent deities who are summoned to receive offerings during the scripture-telling (see below). The number and composition of icons vary according to the occasion. There is a major division into "vegetarian" (*su* 素) and "flesh" (*hun* 葷) icon sets. The first one is used during temple and community festivals, the second one during funerary and memorial services for the dead. Names of sets reflect difference in the ritual meal: during religious celebrations a vegetarian fast is prescribed, while during funerals meat is permitted.<sup>62</sup> The vegetarian set includes eighteen deities, and partially coincides with the flesh set. The one used at the Deity Gao temple consisted of (from left to right) Stove God (*Zaojie* 竈介),<sup>63</sup> Earth God, Blood Light (*Xue guang* 血光), Deity Gao, North Dipper (*Bei dou* 北斗), Amitābha,

<sup>60</sup> Che Xilun writes that during funerary scripture-telling, which he observed, storyteller also hung images of the Ten Kings on the side wall of the hall: Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, p. 201. Those are undoubtedly related to the contents of the performed texts – *Scroll of the Ten Kings* and *Scroll of Hell*.

<sup>61</sup> On *zhima*, see Po Sung-nien and David Johnson, *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems: The Iconography of Everyday Life in Village China: Popular Prints and Papercuts from the Collection of Po Sung-nien* (Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project 2; Berkeley, 1992), pp. 11–12; Anne S. Goodrich, *Peking Paper Gods: A Look at Home Worship* (Nettetal: Steyler, 1991), pp. 23–25.

<sup>62</sup> Yu, "Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao," p. 76. Similar distinctions exist in Baimao, see Qiu, "Baimao diqu xuan juan," pp. 202–3.

<sup>63</sup> That is *Zaojia* 竈家. On the Stove God, and literature dedicated to him (including *baojuan*), see Robert L. Chard, "Folktales on the God of the Stove," *Chinese Studies* 8 (1990), pp. 149–82; idem, "Rituals and Scriptures of the Stove Cult," in David G. Johnson, ed., *Rit-*



Deity of Current Year (Ben ming 本命), Three Realms (San jie 三界), Earth, Buddha-Tathagata (Rulai 如來), Heaven, Guanyin, Longevity Star, South Dipper (Nan dou 南斗), Small King (Xiao wang 小王),<sup>64</sup> General [Liu], City God, and Family Hall God (Jiatang 家堂). All of them were arranged in a single row (figure 1).

In the most orthodox variants, the flesh set includes two rows of icons. Included in the flesh set used for funerary performance, provided to me by Di Qiuyan, are fourteen various deities in the first row: Dizang, Stove God, Taiyi 太乙,<sup>65</sup> Sacred Tiger (Shen hu 神虎), Earth God, God of Fengdu 豐都 [Mountain],<sup>66</sup> one icon for the Ten Kings, Mulian, City God, God of the Family Hall, Three Realms, Deities who Welcome [Souls] to Heaven (Jieyin 接引), Chief Supervisors (Jin Lads), and Great King (Da wang 大王).<sup>67</sup> The second row consists exclusively of the Ten Kings. Sometimes a bench is put on the table in front of sacred image in order to provide space for these two rows of icons.

A storyteller usually sits on the side of the table opposite the deities' images. An accompanist, if present, occupies the place closest to the narrator or on the opposite side of the table, near the sacred images. Usually several storytellers (from three to five) take part in one performance session (communal or private). Storytellers take turns in recitation and musical accompaniment, if needed. For example, Che Xilun reports that five storytellers participated in the funerary session he witnessed. Those were the head of the scripture-telling team, his two apprentices, and two invited accompanists. Apprentices picked up recitation when the head of the scripture-telling team needed rest.<sup>68</sup> Another important part of a scripture-telling team is the chorus. It usually consists of six to eight people who chant the name of the Buddha following the storyteller (*he fo* 和佛). They sit around the table. Other

*ual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies* (Berkeley: California U.P., 1995), pp. 3-54; Randall Nadeau, "Domestication of Precious Scrolls: The *Ssu-ming Tsao-chün pao-chüan*," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 22 (1994), pp. 23-50.

<sup>64</sup> According to local lore, he is a son of the Tang dynasty (618-907) general Zhang Xun 張巡 (708-757, also deified); Pang et al., *Chongxiu Chang-Zhao he zhi gao* 3/11, p. 844.

<sup>65</sup> A star deity, according to Daoist sources, subordinate of Celestial Reverend Primordial (*Tuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊).

<sup>66</sup> Abode of souls of deceased in traditional beliefs, see Ma Shutian, *Zhongguo mingjie zhu shen* 中國冥界諸神 (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1998), pp. 21-31.

<sup>67</sup> According to *baojuan*, the Great King is a deified Song-dynasty person Ping Peng 平朋. In the list provided by Yu Yongliang this name is substituted by the God of Eastern Peak (Dong yue 東嶽) (who in ancient Chinese beliefs controls a person's destiny); Yu, "Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao," p. 76.

<sup>68</sup> Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, p. 206. Storytellers in Zhangjiagang are organized in teams. The usual team includes the head, several apprentices, and the chorus. Teams of storytellers co-operate. Sometimes several heads of teams are invited for a long performance. Most storytellers listed above are the heads of teams. According to Yu Yongliang, the number of

participants of the meeting, who were mainly old women in cases I witnessed, sat in two rows on the sides of the table (as in figure 1).

Offerings to the deities are placed on the table in front of sacred images. In the festival at the Deity Gao temple, these included ritual money, paper lotuses, candy, tea, pastry, and fruits. Tea was poured in small cups placed in front of each paper horse. Six incense burners and six lit candles were also placed in front of the images. Incense sticks were constantly burning during the performance (again, figure 1). There is usually also a thermos and a cup on the table, from which the storyteller can sip tea during the performance.

The storytelling session takes quite a long time; the performance at the Deity Gao festival took eleven hours (from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). A usual funerary performance session takes about sixteen hours (including intermissions for the rest of both performers and audience). The preparation of the scripture hall starts in the morning, but the actual performance takes place in the afternoon and night. The session ends at dawn.

Before starting the recitation of the main text, the storyteller “invites buddhas” (*qing fo* 請佛), using the special text entitled *Baojuan of Inviting Buddhas*.<sup>69</sup> Before listing the names of the deities invited, the storyteller sings an introductory hymn (*zan* 讚):

The pure water of poplar twigs<sup>70</sup>  
Is sprinkling over three thousand [worlds],  
Eight virtues<sup>71</sup> of the empty nature<sup>72</sup> bring fortune to [both]  
people and Heaven.  
Longevity will broadly increase.

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now active teams in Zhangjiagang area is about twenty. Usual payment for a session is about 160 yuan. Furthermore, storyteller receives tips (*lishi qian* 利市錢) during the performance, as believers think such donations bring fortune. Usually storytellers also combine scripture-telling with other occupations, such as work in the field or at the factory. The head of team's average income is quite big for rural areas. Some middle-aged storytellers have apprentices; e.g., Di Qiuyan has two.

<sup>69</sup> For the samples of texts accompanying rituals (invitation and sending-off deities, offerings), see *ZHBF* 2, pp. 1388–98. Similar rituals of inviting and sending-off the deities are used in ritual operas; see e.g., Tanaka Issei 田仲一成, *Chūgoku engeki shi* 中國戲劇史 (Chin. trans. by Yun Guishan 云贵杉 and Yu Yun 于允 [Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan chubanshe: 2002]), pp. 79, 112, 117, 236–46.

<sup>70</sup> Poplar twig is an attribute of a Buddhist monk. Poplar twig sprinkling miraculous water is also included in iconography of Guanyin.

<sup>71</sup> May mean “eight virtues” (*ba gongde* 八功德) of water in the Lotus Pond located in the Pure Land. The eight are: sweetness, freshness, softness, lightness, purity, scentlessness, cleansing, and nourishing.

<sup>72</sup> The emptiness of nature in all things (Chin.: *xing kong* 性空, Skt.: *prakṛti-sūnyatā*, *sūnyatā*).

Original crimes and sins will disappear.

In flames [of hell] red lotuses will bloom.<sup>73</sup>

This verse certainly pronounces the wish of participants of the meeting to redeem their sins, escape from the sufferings of hell, and be reborn in the Pure Land (Paradise of Buddha Amitābha). It invokes the popular image of hell transformed into the Pure Land, and thus is deeply rooted in the ideas of the Pure Land school of Buddhism. After the recitation of this verse, incense is burned and all deities are invited by their names. The pantheon of scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang includes numerous deities of different origin (Buddhist, Daoist, and folk).<sup>74</sup> During the ceremony of inviting deities, the storyteller stands and bows in the direction of sacred images.

After the invitation of deities, the storyteller recites the main text. Each text usually starts with another hymn and a “gāthā on the opening of the scripture (*kai jing ji* 開經偈).” For example, in *Scroll of Mulian* the introductory hymn says:

Lord of the Underworld,  
 Reverend Dizang,  
 With Mulian [and his father] laymen standing on his both sides.  
 You govern the gates of Hell,  
 Rescue the souls of the dead,  
 So that they escape hardships of rebirths for eternity.  
 Homage to the Reverend Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva (literally,  
 most perfect of living beings) King Dizang (last sentence  
 chanted thrice).<sup>75</sup>

The gāthā on the opening of the scripture says:

Opening at first *Baojuan of Mulian*,  
 Bodhisattva Dizang descends [to the altar].  
 Pious descendants in the world of light come to sacrifice for  
 salvation [of ancestors].  
 We will rescue the soul of dead and transfer it to Penglai (Island  
 of Immortals).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Numerous variants exist; this version is cited from *ZHBĴ* 2, p. 1408.

<sup>74</sup> Most of deities are featured in texts and icons. For a list, see Yu, “Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao,” p. 77.

<sup>75</sup> From here on, *Scroll of Mulian* is cited by Hu Zhengxing from ms. copied in 1997 and which was used in performance in November, 2008.

<sup>76</sup> This verse varies according to the name and contents of text. Usually it consists of four lines. In the first two lines appear the name of the text and the featured deity; last two lines deal with the miraculous effect of the text. In the case of *Scroll of Mulian*, performed at funerals, it is the wish of rebirth in paradise. In other texts the verse promises fortune and elimination of disasters, e.g. *ZHBĴ* 1, p. 158.

Scripture-telling alternates the recitation of prose parts with the singing of verses. At the moment the storyteller finishes each second (rhymed) line of verse, the chorus sings the last syllable in the line together with the storyteller and chants the name of Buddha Amitābha: “Homage to <sup>77</sup> Buddha Amitābha!” (*Na-ai, ma-ya, A-ya mi-ya tuo-ya he-ya he-he-fo* 呐哎·麼呀·阿呀弥呀陀呀訶呀訶訶佛). In the Zhangjiagang area, usually pious females who are familiar with the story and manner of performance form the chorus. Chorus members are also engaged in the preparation of ritual paraphernalia. Women are folding ritual money (made of foil) and paper lotuses right at the time of performance.

Storytellers in Zhangjiagang often enact character roles in special voice modes. This performance manner is certainly connected with the influence of *tanci* and other storytelling genres. Mark Bender calls this division of character voices in performance speaking registers, following terminology proposed by John M. Foley.<sup>78</sup> In Chinese storytelling genres, voices of characters as well as the narrative mode may be differentiated linguistically through the use of archaic and local forms of speech. In Zhangjiagang scripture-telling, shifts in voice quality usually mark switch to another character’s voice. The enactment of roles in the Zhangjiagang scripture-telling tradition is clearly pronounced in the performance of secular scrolls, such as the above mentioned *Scroll of Pipa*. In some *baojuan* texts employed by the Zhangjiagang storytellers, the roles are even marked by the terms used in Chinese musical drama – “main male character” (*zheng sheng* 正生), female character (*dan* 旦), clown (*chou* 丑), and so forth – for example, in *Scroll of Butterfly and Immortal* (*Hudie xian juan* 蝴蝶仙卷).<sup>79</sup>

The storyteller may stop a performance for some time, so that the whole team gets rest. Before interrupting the performance, as happened during the recitation of *Scroll of Mulian* on October 3, 2008, the storyteller announces the break: “Let us have a rest for some time, homage to Amitābha Buddha!”

Each text of scripture-telling ends with a verse which summarizes the contents of text and contains best wishes. For example, *Scroll of Mulian* ends with the two verses in seven- and five-syllable meter:

We have completely recited *Baojuan of Mulian*.  
Bodhisattva Dizang is rejoiced in his heart.

<sup>77</sup> Chin. transcription of Skt. “*namo*.”

<sup>78</sup> Bender, “A Description of ‘Jiangjing,’” p. 110; Bender, *Plum and Bamboo*, pp. 26, 87.

<sup>79</sup> *ZHBj* 2, pp. 1291–96.

Pious [descendants] in the world of light prayed with sincere thoughts.  
 The soul of dead was rescued and rose to the Western heaven  
 (i.e., Pure Land).  
 Buddhas of three epochs on the meeting of happy [karmic] links,  
 Bodhisattva Dizang rescue souls of dead.  
 All reverend bodhisattvas-[ma]hasattvas  
 Rescued the soul of dead, and it ascended to the heavenly court.  
 The second verse is:  
 We have recited the *baojuan* completely.  
 The sins of the soul of dead were redeemed.  
 [People] of the world of light came to pray for [the deceased],  
 The soul of dead will early ascend to heaven.

After all of the narrative texts have been completely recited; the ritual of sending-off the deities by name is performed. Then the storyteller burns incense and sings:

If there are some reverend [deities], who have not still been sent off,  
 They will be moved by incense smoke and depart themselves,  
 Immortals of the higher realm return to the higher realm,  
 Immortals of the middle realm turn to the temple gates,  
 Immortals of the lower realm return to the underground abode,  
 Immortals of the water abode turn to their palace gates.

After that, the icons<sup>80</sup> and ritual money are taken outside the room, where they are burned. The sounds of firecrackers symbolize the departure of deities. The participants of the meeting collect the food offered to deities and take it home. Consumption of offerings is believed to bring good fortune to all family members. After the ritual of sending off deities, the participants of the meeting are allowed to stop fasting. Following the end of the performance at the Deity Gao temple, there was a big collective meal with meat dishes.

The main features of organization and ritual frame of the performance, described above, are basically the same in the Baimao *baojuan* performances. There, storytellers also arrange icons and offerings, write memorials, work together with the chorus and follow the elaborate rituals of opening (*kai juan* 開卷) and closing the scripture.<sup>81</sup>

These elements are also similar with those of the Jingjiang tradition. There, scripture-telling also requires the organization of the scrip-

<sup>80</sup> Only paper horses, but not sacred images; the latter are reused.

<sup>81</sup> Qiu, "Baimao diqu xuan juan," pp. 203-13.

ture hall, where sacred images and small icons are displayed. The  *فوتou* in Jingjiang perform similar rituals of deities' invitation, offerings to them, and their send-offs. In Jingjiang there are also prescribed texts, which are sung during these rituals: *gāthā* of inviting buddhas (*qing fo ji* 請佛偈), *gāthā* of offering tea [to deities] (*shang cha ji* 上茶偈), and *gāthā* of sending buddhas off (*song fo ji* 送佛偈). The concluding rituals of scripture-telling in Jingjiang also include recitation and burning of a memorial for deities (*nian [shu]biao* 念疏表), which contains names and birth information of the host and main guests.<sup>82</sup> There are also two main introductory verses in a *baojuan* text, as in Zhangjiagang area, called “announcing the beginning (*jiao tou* 叫頭)” (or “*gāthā* on the beginning of scroll” – *qi juan ji* 起卷偈) and “*gāthā* on opening the scripture (*kai jing ji* 啓經偈).” The second one also tells the name of the text and deities featured in it.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, there are certain distinctions in the accompanying ritual texts in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang scripture-telling. For example, the meeting I witnessed in Jingjiang started with the recitation of a text on “bowing with the vow” (*bai yuan* 拜願), and recitation of [Buddhist] prayers (*nian gongke* 念功課).<sup>84</sup> At the beginning of the performance of main narrative text, the  *فوتou* in Jingjiang sings four lines of the *Sacred Edict* (*Sheng yu* 聖諭)<sup>85</sup> and invokes “three friends (Confucius, Lao-zi, and Buddha) and four mercies (Heaven and Earth, sun and moon, water and soil, and both parents).”<sup>86</sup> These specific rituals and terms do not seem to appear in modern scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang. Nevertheless, main components of accompanying ritual are the same. This conclusion allows disagreeing with Lu Yongfeng 陸永峰 and Che Xilun, who argue that scripture-telling in Jingjiang has a unique status among other traditions of *baojuan* performance in Jiangnan, because it preserves archaic ritual setting.<sup>87</sup>

Private meetings that feature scripture-telling for extending longevity in Jingjiang are similar to those for funerary scripture-telling in

<sup>82</sup> *ZJB* 2, p. 1637.

<sup>83</sup> *ZJB* 2, pp. 1637–38.

<sup>84</sup> The second ritual included recitation of the *Dhāraṇī of Great Compassion* (*Da bei zhou* 大悲咒), *Sutra of Heart of Prajñāpāramitā* (般若波羅蜜多心經; Skt.: *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*) and other texts, apparently derived from the orthodox Buddhist tradition.

<sup>85</sup> This term alludes to state-promoted didactic lectures; see Victor H. Mair, “Language and Ideology in the Sacred Edict,” in David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 332–55.

<sup>86</sup> For the records of actual phrasing of these rituals, see Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 28–33.

<sup>87</sup> Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, p. 129.

Zhangjiagang in terms of schedule and duration: they are long, and also usually take a day and a night. However, scripture-telling sessions in Jingjiang are longer than those in Zhangjiagang. The one that I witnessed started at 8 a.m. and ended at 8 a.m. on the following day.

There are also certain minor differences in the organization of the performance. For example, in Jingjiang, the chorus often consists of old men, not women as in Zhangjiagang. In Jingjiang there is also a supplementary visual aid – a small folding screen painted with images of deities, which is placed on the table during the performances. To my knowledge, it is not used in Zhangjiagang.

### SUBJECT MATTER

Similarities in the organization of scripture-telling and the geographical proximity of traditions in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang may lead one to suppose that historically they had the same origin. Unfortunately, very little is known about that, especially because of a lack of data from external sources. Connections among the contents of scripture-telling texts in Jingjiang and Zhangjiagang may prove a hypothesis of common origin. We have already seen ritual texts of approximately the same contents, such as *Scroll of the Ten Kings*. Furthermore, the *baojuan* in Jingjiang and Zhangjiagang often tell similar stories of deities. Some *baojuan* in both areas even have similar titles and subjects: [*Baojuan of Xiangshan*, [*Baojuan of Mulian*, *Baojuan of Jade Emperor* (*Yuhuang baojuan* 玉皇寶卷), *True Scripture* (or *Baojuan in Jingjiang*) of *Earth Mother* (*Dimu zhen jing* 地母真經)].<sup>88</sup>

However, such similarity may be merely superficial. For example, Che Xilun states that the story of Chen Zichun 陳子(梓)春 is featured similarly in both *Baojuan of Three Officials* (*San guan baojuan* 三官寶卷) in Zhangjiagang and *Baojuan of Zitong* 梓潼寶卷 in Jingjiang.<sup>89</sup> However, if one looks closely at the texts in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang, one discovers that the story differs from one place to the other. First, I found the story of Chen Zichun not in *Baojuan of Three Officials*, but in *Baojuan of Mercy and Grievance of Chen Zichun* (*Chen Zichun en yuan baojuan* 陳子春恩怨寶卷), as published in the collection of texts from Zhangjiagang. Texts in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang narrate the story of the earthly life of Zichun, his marriage with three dragon princesses, and the elevation

<sup>88</sup> *ZHBJ* 1, pp. 32–60, 281–90, 61–67, 2, pp. 1408–10; *ZJB* 1, pp. 203–60, 379–406, 583–96, 727–36.

<sup>89</sup> *ZHBJ* 1, pp. 457–76; *ZJB* 1, pp. 261–98.

of their sons as the Three Primordials (San yuan 三元, or Emperors of Heaven, Earth, and Water). Second, the narrative details are very different. For example, in *Baojuan of Mercy and Grievance of Chen Zichun* there is Zichun's elder son Jiangliuer 江流兒 (Son, Floating on the River) by his first earthly wife; his story is obviously modeled after the story of Xuanzang's childhood, as narrated in *Journey to the West*.<sup>90</sup> *Baojuan of the Stove Master* (*Zaojun baojuan* 竈君寶卷) in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang both deal with the story of Venerable Mother Ms. Chen 陳氏老母<sup>91</sup> and Zhang Jiuling 張九齡, later appointed as Stove God – Lord of Destiny of the Eastern Kitchen (Dong chu si ming 東廚司命).<sup>92</sup> However, the Jingjiang text is centered on the story of Zhang Jiuling leaving his wife, which is absent from Zhangjiagang version. Texts with similar titles in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang narrate completely different stories of the same deities, for example, *Baojuan of Earth God* and *Baojuan of Dizang* in both areas.<sup>93</sup> Three Mao and the Great Sage – the most popular deities featured in Jingjiang scripture-telling – do not seem to appear at all in Zhangjiagang texts. Apparently most stories and even the details of similar stories are not the same between Jingjiang and Zhangjiagang, although they may be connected with cults of the same deities. Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang displays more variety in titles, while the texts are much shorter than in Jingjiang.<sup>94</sup> Links between Jingjiang and Zhangjiagang texts, which relate to the possible derivation of texts from written sources (see the section “Written Transmission,” below), require further detailed research.

Most texts performed in Zhangjiagang now can be characterized as those typical of the third period of *baojuan* development. However, there is some evidence that sects and their ideology had impact on the scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang. According to Che Xilun's information, storytellers in Zhangjiagang whom he interviewed kept *Baojuan of Indication the Way to Return to Emptiness of Non-Action of the Great Vehicle* (*Dasheng Wuwei gui kong zhi lu baojuan* 大乘無為歸空指路寶卷)<sup>95</sup> and

<sup>90</sup> *ZHBĴ* 1, p. 470.

<sup>91</sup> This deity is certainly connected with sectarian worship of Venerable Mother (see Introduction).

<sup>92</sup> *ZHBĴ* 1, pp. 81–84; *ZĴB* 1, pp. 683–726. A similar story in Jingjiang is *Baojuan of the Eastern Kitchen* (*Dong chu baojuan* 東廚寶卷); *ZĴB* 1, pp. 493–506.

<sup>93</sup> *ZHBĴ* 1, pp. 240–42, 141–46; *ZĴB* 1, pp. 299–338, 473–92.

<sup>94</sup> The total number of texts in Jingjiang is about fifty, while in Zhangjiagang it is in the hundreds. Many texts with similar titles (and apparently contents) as in Zhangjiagang have been collected in Changshu; Che, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 405–14; Qiu, “Baimao diqu xuan juan,” pp. 236–46.

<sup>95</sup> It is not clear if it is the same text published under the title *Zhi lu baojuan* in *ZHBĴ* 2, pp. 1357–60.



*Baojuan of [Patriarch of] Returning to Origin in Hell* (*Huan yuan diyu baojuan* 還源地獄寶卷).<sup>96</sup> Both were used in funerary services.<sup>97</sup> There is also *Scroll of Nine Dark [Realms] of Hell* (*Jiu you diyu baojuan* 九幽地獄寶卷) published in the collection of Zhangjiangang texts,<sup>98</sup> which is similar to *Baojuan of [Patriarch of] Returning to Origin in Hell*. It deals with the journey of Patriarch Luo [Qing], also called Patriarch of Returning to Origin in the text, through hell. These texts are undoubtedly connected with the Teaching of Returning to Origin and/or Teaching of Non-Action. Che Xilun notes that *Baojuan of [Patriarch of] Returning to Origin in Hell* reproduces closely an early *baojuan* known in the late sixteenth-century edition.<sup>99</sup>

In Jingjiang scripture-telling there is evidence of connections to sectarian teachings. Some old *fotou* in Jingjiang recalled that their predecessors performed *Five Scriptures in Six Volumes* (*Wu bu liu ce* 五部六冊). Transmission of these texts stopped in Jingjiang long ago. According to certain *fotou*, these texts constituted the group of “Great Vehicle Scrolls” (*Da sheng juan* 大乘卷),<sup>100</sup> while sacred scrolls performed today were known as “Small Vehicle Scrolls” (*Xiao sheng juan* 小乘卷).<sup>101</sup> *Five Scriptures in Six Volumes* most probably refers to texts composed by Luo Qing, the founder of the Teaching of Non-Action.<sup>102</sup> It is well-known that one of the branches of this religion was transmitted to Jiangnan as early as in the sixteenth century, and these scriptures also figure in historical documents.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, it is very possible that they were transmitted to Jingjiang. One can also detect some vestiges of minor sectarian ideas in the rituals accompanying scripture-telling in Jingjiang.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>96</sup> The Religion of Returning to the Origin emerged at the end of the 16th century in modern Hebei province; Ma Xisha 馬西沙 and Han Bingfang 韓秉方, *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi* 中國民間宗教史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2004) 1, pp. 420–21. However, here the title Patriarch of Returning to the Origin may be applied to Luo Qing 羅清 (1442–1527), the founder of the Teaching of Non-Action.

<sup>97</sup> Che, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 403–4.

<sup>98</sup> *ZHBJ* 1, pp. 218–32.

<sup>99</sup> Che, *Zhongguo baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 394–95.

<sup>100</sup> Great Vehicle (Mahayana) was one of the schools of Buddhism. However, this name was also applied to one of the branches of the Teaching of Non-Action (Wuweijiao 無為教) since the 15th century; Ma and Han, *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi* 1, p. 195.

<sup>101</sup> *ZJB* 2, pp. 1633–34.

<sup>102</sup> These texts, first published in 1509, are considered to be the earliest reliably dated *baojuan*; see Overmyer, *Precious Volumes*, pp. 92–135.

<sup>103</sup> Ma and Han, *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi* 1, pp. 189–307; see also Barend J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1992), p. 202–8.

<sup>104</sup> *ZJB* 2, pp. 1634–35.

Che Xilun has supposed that in older times scripture-telling in Jingjiang was performed by followers of sects as well as by non-sectarian folk religious specialists (usually imitating Buddhist and Daoist monks) and constituted only one of their activities. Later professional storytellers, known today as *fotou*, emerged.<sup>105</sup> According to Che, scripture-telling in both Jingjiang and Zhangjiagang stems from the sectarian tradition of *baojuan* recitation. It is a part of his hypothesis that *baojuan* of the late period and their performances in Jiangnan grew out of the sectarian texts and rituals.<sup>106</sup> Though this may be true for the earlier stage in *baojuan* development in the broader region, the sectarian activities might have played minor roles in the establishment of scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang. One cannot fully accept one scenario or another until more data are available.

In spite of many points of similarity, there are two major differences between modern scripture-telling of Zhangjiagang and that of Jingjiang. The first, concerning the musical accompaniment, and the second – the use of performance scripts – will be discussed subsequently.

#### MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Musical accompaniment of scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang is much more varied than that in Jingjiang. In all the performances in Zhangjiagang that I witnessed, the masters of scripture-telling always employed a clapper (*qipai* 氣拍),<sup>107</sup> a percussion instrument called a wooden fish (*muyu* 木魚, or 木偶), and *xingzi* 星子<sup>108</sup> (figure 2). All these instruments were placed on the table in front of the performer for his or her convenience (figure 3). During the performance the sound of the clapper notifies the audience and chorus when the singing of the refrain ends and the performer will start a new prose passage. However, during the performance of *Scroll of Mulian* the accompaniment of the *huqin* 胡琴 – a two-string, bowed instrument – was also used for the singing parts. One accompanist, Hu Zhengxing, assisted (figure 4). The storytellers stroke the wooden fish and *xingzi* separately or together for different melodies to punctuate the rhythm of singing parts, which were accompanied by the *huqin*. String accompaniment was also present at

<sup>105</sup> ZJB 2, p. 1635.

<sup>106</sup> Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, p. 120.

<sup>107</sup> Known under different names in different traditions – “awakening block” (*jingtang mu* 警堂木) in *tanci* storytelling, “spirit plate” (*ling pai* 靈牌) in Daoist services, and “Buddha’s measure” (*fo chi* 佛尺) in Buddhist context.

<sup>108</sup> A small percussion instrument, similar to the “guiding gong” (*yin qing* 引磬) in Buddhist monastic traditions.

the funerary scripture-telling described by Che Xilun. Performances during temple festivals, which I witnessed, had no string accompaniment. Yu Yongliang notes that the scripture-telling ensemble that included *huqin* is only a basic set. In earlier times, storytellers employed more instruments, such as drums and gongs, castanets (*xiangban* 響板), *sheng* 笙 (reed pipe), flute (*di* 笛), cymbals (*bo* 鈸), and *zheng* 箏 (a sort of zither).<sup>109</sup> In Baimao, the *baojuan* recitation also uses wooden fish accompaniment, although string and wind instruments are also potentially available.<sup>110</sup> Apparently, performances in both places can employ a variety of accompaniment ensembles.

The number of melodies used during scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang is about forty; frequently at least more than a dozen are used. For example, the major melodies used in *Scroll of Mulian* were “[Crying] during Five Watches” (*wu geng diao* 五更調), “Even Tune” (*ping diao* 平調), “Harmonized Tune” (*fu he diao* 符合調), and “Nine Pacifications” (*jiu an diao* 九安調). These tune titles were not marked in the text, so it seems that a storyteller would rely on his or her experience to pick the appropriate one.<sup>111</sup> When an accompanist is present, the storyteller works in close cooperation, as both follow the set order of melodies in the text performance.

In Jingjiang, the scripture-telling uses only percussion instruments. They are equivalents of the wooden fish, clapper, and bell. Furthermore, melodies are basically limited to three: those used for seven- and ten-syllable verses (*ping diao* 平調 and *han shi zi* 含十字, respectively),<sup>112</sup> and the aria “Wearing a Golden Lock” (*Gua jin suo* 挂金鎖), which has uneven lines. Che Xilun has noted that old *fontou* recalled that earlier there were more scripture-telling melodies, but they have been forgotten.<sup>113</sup> These melodies were probably connected with the arias widely used in *baojuan* during the second period of development, melodies like “Wearing a Golden Lock.”<sup>114</sup>

The distinction in scripture-telling musical accompaniment between Jingjiang and Zhangjiagang is clearer if we consider it against

<sup>109</sup> Yu, “Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao,” p. 76.

<sup>110</sup> Qiu, “Baimao diqu xuan juan,” p. 210.

<sup>111</sup> However, there are texts in which the melody names are listed (notes preserved even in edited form); see *ZHBJ* 1, p. 74.

<sup>112</sup> Both melodies have a number of variants, differing by the sort of refrain (*he fo*) and the place of its insertion.

<sup>113</sup> *ZJB* 2, p. 1639.

<sup>114</sup> A number of arias, including this one, are still sung during *baojuan* performance in Gansu and in Gaoluo village, Hebei. On their lists and origins, see Duan, *Hexi baojuan*, pp. 169–70; Xue, “Hebei Yixian, Laishui de ‘Houtu baojuan,’” pp. 36–37.

the classification used for *baojuan* performances in the broader Suzhou area. There, storytellers themselves characterize *baojuan* performances as “scroll recitation with the wooden fish [accompaniment]” (*mu yu xuan juan*) and “scroll recitation with string [accompaniment]” (*sixian xuan juan* 丝弦宣卷). Scroll recitation of the first type employs only percussion, as in Jingjiang. Scroll recitation of the second type requires a small orchestra not only with percussion (including the wooden fish), but also string and wind instruments, such as *huqin*, *sanxian* 三弦 (three-string instrument), dulcimer (*yangqin* 扬琴), lute (*pipa* 琵琶), *sheng*, flutes, gongs, and others. Therefore, the scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang in its *huqin* form can be characterized as scroll recitation with string accompaniment, while when it does not use *huqin* it is still scroll recitation with the wooden fish accompaniment. Scroll recitation with string accompaniment still exists in some areas of Suzhou, for example in Tongli 同里 town (under the jurisdiction of Wujiang 吴江 city south of Suzhou). Scroll recitation with the wooden fish is considered a more archaic form than that with string accompaniment. The latter developed under the influence of *tanci* and local drama. Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang should have followed the same way of development.

The musical variety within Zhangjiagang scripture-telling can be explained by its close connection with a local theatre genre and folk songs (“mountain songs” [*shan’ge* 山歌]) popular in this region.<sup>115</sup> Yu Yongliang has noted that many melodies used in scripture-telling performances were at the same time basic melodies in *tanhuang* 灘簧 (also written as 攤簧, “sandbank reed pipes”), for example “Reed Pipe Tune” (*huang diao* 簧調), “Purple Bamboo Tune” (*zi zhu diao* 紫竹調), “Four Seasons Tune” (*si ji diao* 四季調), “Suzhou Scenery” (*Suzhou jing* 蘇州景), “Tune of Nine Heights” (*jiu kang diao* 九亢調) etc.<sup>116</sup> *Tanhuang* is a form of local theatre that developed out of different kinds of storytelling, including scroll recitation and *tanci*, in several areas of Jiangnan around the 17th–19th centuries. Originally, in the 17th–19th centuries, *tanhuang* was a performing art, in which all roles were enacted by a few storytellers. This enactment grew out of the similar imitation of characters’ voices as in scroll recitation and *tanci* (see Ritual Setting).

<sup>115</sup> For the collection of Zhangjiagang *shan’ge*, see Li Hanzhong 李漢忠 et al., eds., *Zhongguo Heyang shan’ge ji* 中國河陽山歌集 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2006). For general information on *shan’ge* in the region, see Antoinet Schimmelpenninck, *Chinese Folk Songs and Folk Singers: Shan’ge Traditions in Southern Jiangsu* (Leiden: Chime, 1997); Cornelia Töpelmann, trans., *Shan-ko von Feng Meng-lung* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1973).

<sup>116</sup> Yu Yongliang, “Daojiao hua de Heyang *baojuan* yu minjian xiqu” 道教化的河陽寶卷與民間戲曲, *Zhong-Han wenhua yanjiu* (Nanjing daxue Zhong-Han wenhua yanjiu zhongxin) 中韓文化研究 (南京大學中韓文化研究中心) 5 (2003), p. 295.

Gradually, gestures and costumes were added, and musical accompaniment became more complex. Therefore, in the middle of the 19th century, *tanhuang* evolved from storytelling into pure dramatic form, and scroll recitation was certainly an important source of influence on its music and subject matter.<sup>117</sup>

*Tanhuang* in its original, storytelling form was very popular in the Zhangjiagang area. Performances of scripture-telling and *tanhuang* coincided at the temple fairs mentioned earlier. Furthermore, musical instruments used for scripture-telling and for *tanhuang* performances were basically the same. The *tanhuang* repertoire borrowed some subjects from scripture-telling, especially secular scrolls.<sup>118</sup> Apparently scripture-telling and *tanhuang* developed simultaneously, and influenced each other. It is evident that the more elaborate music of *tanhuang* influenced the accompaniment of scripture-telling.

Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang is also closely related to songs called *shan'ge*, which are common in the area and probably the predecessors of local drama. Some melodies included in *baojuan* texts may be performed separately as *shan'ge*, for example “Four Seasons,” “[Crying] during Five Watches,” “Flower Names for the Twelve Months” (*shier yue hua ming* 十二月花名), and others.<sup>119</sup> Besides, *shan'ge* and the verse passages of Zhangjiagang *baojuan* use the same seven-syllable meter and rhyme scheme (the latter is based on pronunciations in the local topolect). Yu Yongliang also argues that *baojuan* completely composed of verses, which, as was said, constitute a considerable part of small scrolls, may be adaptations of *shan'ge*. For example, there are *Scroll of Flower Names* (*Hua ming juan* 花名卷), *Marriage of Praying Mantis* (*Tanglang zuo qin* 螳螂做親), and *Deity of Luoyang Bridge* (*Luoyang qiao shen* 洛陽橋神) (the second *baojuan* also contains some prose passages).<sup>120</sup> However, one can doubt that *shan'ge* preceded *baojuan* texts. All the subjects listed above also existed in the scroll recitation repertoires of other areas,

<sup>117</sup> Leading specialists in *tanhuang* argue that the main predecessor of *tanhuang* was dramatized folk songs (*shan'ge*). On the development of *tanhuang*, see Jonathan P.J. Stock, *Huju: Traditional Opera in Modern Shanghai* (Oxford; New York: Oxford U.P., 2003), pp. 33–58; Zhu Hengfu 朱恆夫, *Tanhuang kao lun* 灘簧考論 (Shanghai: Shanghai shiji chubanshan, 2008), pp. 8–28.

<sup>118</sup> Yu, “Daojiao hua de Heyang *baojuan* yu minjian xiqu,” pp. 294–99.

<sup>119</sup> Yu, “Heyang *baojuan* diaocha baogao,” pp. 81–82.

<sup>120</sup> Li, *Zhongguo Heyang shan'ge ji*, p. xii. Local scholars included versions (or adaptations) in verse of these and similar texts in the collection of Zhangjiagang folk songs, see Li et al., *Zhongguo Heyang shan'ge ji*, pp. 276–78, 203–4, 324–33. For another view of the connection of scroll recitation in Jiangsu with different forms of folk music, see Schimmelpenninck, *Chinese Folk Songs*, pp. 99–100.

represented by numerous manuscripts and editions.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, *baojuan* texts may have been at first transmitted to the Zhangjiagang area, and then some subjects were included in the *shan'ge* repertoire. It is worth noting that storytellers who specialized in scripture-telling also performed *shan'ge*, for example, Hu Zhengxing, Yu Guanbao, female storyteller Lu Yueqin 陸月琴 (1943–2006), and others.

Musical accompaniment of scripture-telling in Jingjiang seems to be more archaic than in Zhangjiagang. However, one should note that modern musical accompaniment of Jingjiang scripture-telling is probably the result of the extinction of melodies of early *baojuan*. Accompaniment simplified as Jingjiang scripture-telling does not seem to have borrowed a lot from other forms of storytelling and drama in terms of music in the recent stages of its development. Zhangjiagang storytelling, on the contrary, evolved in close connection with other genres of singing and storytelling and always maintained contact with them, which presumably led to the enrichment of its musical qualities.

#### WRITTEN TRANSMISSION

The second important difference seen in the scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang versus that of Jingjiang is the use of written texts in the performances. These are usually manuscripts copied by the storytellers themselves (see figure 5). During the performance, the storyteller puts the text on the table and constantly consults it (figures 2 and 4). Although the storytellers claim that they know almost all most popular texts by heart, they continue to adhere to this tradition. However, they also admit that sometimes they transcend the limits of the text and develop (*fahui* 發揮) the story. This divergence is at a minimum, although I observed few departures while following the copy of the manuscript of *Scroll of Mulian* during its performance. Script even seems to define the scripture-telling genre in the eyes of storytellers. As Yu Guanbao has noted, performance without a script is *tanci*, not scripture-telling.

Manuscripts have been commonly used as educational tools for young storytellers. As all storytellers I met recalled, they studied scripture-telling from their teachers partly by copying manuscripts.<sup>122</sup> All the storytellers whom I met in Fenghuang town are literate. According to the

<sup>121</sup> Che, *Zhongguo baojuan zongmu*, pp. 82–84, 277–78, 140–43.

<sup>122</sup> Copying manuscripts remained one of the major activities of a storyteller during his or her life. For example, storyteller Lu Wengen 陸文淦 (1913–2002) copied *baojuan* all his life (more than 1,000); *ZHBJ* 2, p. 1474. Today xeroxing and computer input are widely used to multiply texts.

lists of storytellers, prepared by local scholars, most of the now active storytellers have at least an elementary school educational level.<sup>123</sup> As modern storytellers recall, their teachers (addressed as *lao shigong* 老師公) were also literate enough to read and copy texts of scriptures.

In Jingjiang, in contrast, texts are not used in scripture-telling performances (with the exception of the texts of liturgies). *Fotou* claim that their art is transmitted primarily orally. In previous times, the majority of *fotou* were illiterate.<sup>124</sup> In this regard, scripture-telling in Jingjiang seems to differ significantly from all other known traditions of *baojuan* performance. David Johnson, who has analyzed records on *baojuan* performances of different regions from the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century, has noted that the use of scripts seems to have been a constant, peculiar feature of this art. He argued that “texts seem to have always been part of *hsüan chuan* [that is, *xuan juan*] performances, either as props or as actual scripts.”<sup>125</sup> Scripts are also used by the performers of *baojuan* in Baimao and Shanghu (Changshu), Tongli town, and Gansu and Hebei provinces.<sup>126</sup> This mode of performance is called “recitation following the script” (*zhao ben xuan ke* 照本宣科).

It seems that scripture-telling in Jingjiang in the old days was also closely connected with written texts. Although the *fotou* there do not rely on scripts during performance, they sometimes have recorded versions of texts they perform. Chinese scholars who study scripture-telling in Jingjiang often employ these written versions in their research. For example, Lu Yongfeng in his book co-authored with Che Xilun frequently cites manuscripts owned by *fotou*, and admits that his work is mainly a study of written texts, and not actually performed scripture-telling.<sup>127</sup> In recent times, written texts have been widely used in the education of the students of the *fotou*.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, there is information about the origin of some Jingjiang scripture-telling texts from written printed versions. For example, the editors of the Jingjiang *baojuan* collection noted that *Baojuan of Mulian Rescuing His Mother* (*Mulian jiu mu baojuan* 目蓮救母寶卷)<sup>129</sup> was based on the edition published by

<sup>123</sup> *ZHB* 2, pp. 1471-74.

<sup>124</sup> *ZJB* 2, p. 1635.

<sup>125</sup> David Johnson, “Mu-lien in *pao-chüan*: The Performative Context and Religious Meaning of the *You-ming pao-chüan*,” in David Johnson, ed. *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 77.

<sup>126</sup> Che, “*Suzhou xuanjuan*,” p. 55; Fang, *Hexi baojuan zhenben*, p. 313; Xue, “*Hebei Yixian, Laishui*,” p. 31.

<sup>127</sup> Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, p. i

<sup>128</sup> Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, p. 437.

<sup>129</sup> It is not clear if it is still performed by *fotou*.

Shanghai Hongda Morality Books Publishers (Hongda shanshu ju 宏大善書局) and transmitted in Jingjiang for a long time.<sup>130</sup> Che Xilun has supposed that recitation of sacred scrolls and liturgies in the Jingjiang tradition originally employed written texts. Their disappearance was the result of the gradual emergence of Jingjiang *fotou* as professional storytellers.<sup>131</sup>

The scripts of Zhangjiagang storytellers provide some facts of the history of scripture-telling in this region. Texts are transmitted mainly in form of manuscripts, but the storytellers also own some editions of *baojuan* (nowadays usually xerox copies of old editions of the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century). For example, Di Jianxin owns a copy of *Baojuan of Xiangshan* printed in 1886 (figure 6). Text of *Illustrated Baojuan of Cock's Cry* (*Huitu Ji ming baojuan* 繪圖雞鳴寶卷), reprinted in the collection of Zhangjiagang texts, originally comes from the lithographic edition of Shanghai Wenyi 文益 Publishers of 1915 owned by Hu Zhengxing.<sup>132</sup> Apparently, some manuscripts were copied from published *baojuan*. Colophons of manuscripts sometimes tell the history of a text transmission; however, they are not always reliable. For example, Yu Yongliang concluded that some *baojuan* in modern Zhangjiagang area appeared in the Song dynasty (960–1279) on the basis of the colophon of *Baojuan of Xu Miaoying* (*Xu Miaoying baojuan* 徐妙英寶卷) manuscript, which stated that manuscripts made during 1883–1993 were originally copied from a Song-dynasty woodblock edition.<sup>133</sup> Apparently, such information is not true. It was certainly invented by the person who copied this manuscript and wanted to prove its long genealogy.<sup>134</sup> Che Xilun has proven with the use of numerous sources that the earliest *baojuan*, and even the name of genre itself, appeared no earlier than the very end of the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368), or even the first century of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).<sup>135</sup>

Photocopies of several late-nineteenth-century editions of *baojuan* also were found in Baimao, though performers there usually use manuscripts, as do masters of scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>130</sup> ZJB 1, p. 405. This edition dated 1922 is available in several library collections in China and abroad; Che, *Zhongguo baojuan zongmu*, p. 166. However, comparison of its text with those published in the Jingjiang collection demonstrates divergences, especially in the final part. This may be the elaboration of Jingjiang *fotou*.

<sup>131</sup> Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, p. 437.

<sup>132</sup> ZHB 1, p. iv.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Such cases of pretence to antiquity (*tuogu* 托古) are widespread in *baojuan* literature; see Che, *Zhongguo baojuan zongmu*, p. xiv.

<sup>135</sup> Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, p. 12.

<sup>136</sup> Qiu, "Baimao diqu xuan juan," p. 214.



The use of manuscripts and editions in scripture-telling performance in Zhangjiagang raises an important question of the status of *baojuan* texts. The evidence discussed above demonstrates that storytellers made use of *baojuan* editions mass-produced by Jiangnan publishers at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. These were supervised by educated people who edited popular stories, sometimes their names appearing in the editions).<sup>137</sup> Moreover, editions of both Buddhist and secular scrolls are present in the Zhangjiagang area. Even if some editions were originally based on folklore, those tales reached the commonfolk audience already transformed. There is also evidence that local literate people of higher social status participated in editing texts used by storytellers in performance. Yu Yongliang lists several such persons, who were active in the early 1900s in Fenghuang town: Yang Zaike 楊再可, Yang Zhenming 楊振明, and Xie Zhuangxian 謝莊先.<sup>138</sup> Unfortunately, there is no precise information on their origins and professions.

One may corroborate these facts about literati participation with evidence from the Jingjiang tradition. In Jingjiang, there is a legend about an anonymous unsuccessful candidate in the imperial examinations who abandoned learning and specialized in editing and performing *baojuan* texts.<sup>139</sup> Traces of classical literature's influence on today's performance texts prove this legend: storytellers in Jingjiang extensively use classical Chinese in different instances and often quote Confucian classics.<sup>140</sup>

The textual basis and probable literati participation in the establishment of scripture-telling traditions in Zhangjiagang and Jingjiang may lead us to redefine the status of texts performed there. Several Western and Chinese scholars have already defined *baojuan* texts in these areas as folklore. Mark Bender has discussed modern Jingjiang scripture-telling performances and analyzed the techniques of performer/audience dynamics from the perspective of modern folklore theory. He demonstrates the performer's manipulative power and the techniques aimed at creating a desired effect on the audience, as well as the involvement of part of audience (namely the chorus) in the creation of the story.<sup>141</sup> Gao Guofan 高國藩 has labeled scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang as folklore as well. He has argued that *baojuan* in

<sup>137</sup> Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, p. 14.

<sup>138</sup> *ZHB* 1, p. V.

<sup>139</sup> Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 120, 436.

<sup>140</sup> Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 228-47.

<sup>141</sup> Bender, "A Description of 'Jiangjing'," pp. 111-12, 119.

Zhangjiagang represent folklore, as many of them deal with folk stories and are included in folk rituals.<sup>142</sup>

As we have seen, oral literature techniques are present in Zhangjiagang scripture-telling. I have already noted the use of performance registers by the storyteller, the involvement of the chorus, the mixture of aural and visual elements (ritual paraphernalia). The Zhangjiagang storyteller tries to maintain contact with the audience, as revealed by remarks on the course of narration (see the announcement of the pause, mentioned above). This contact also appears in rhetoricized addresses to the audience. Some of them are even preserved in written texts. For example, in *Baojuan of Zhang Yi* 張義寶卷 the narrator comments: “Dear all (*ge wei* 各位), now regarding this white arsenic, where did Ms. Wang get it from? This was prepared by Zhang Ren. That is because officials always have poison prepared in advance.”<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, such relatively elaborate musical accompaniment in Zhangjiagang, expressed even in the requirement of the exclusive usage of ringing female voices in chorus, points to even stronger emphasis on performance atmosphere than in Jingjiang.

Nevertheless, we have already seen some features that distinguish Zhangjiagang scripture-telling from folklore, which is commonly understood as oral folk literature. Unlike the majority of folk storytellers, the Zhangjiagang performers use scripts. Folk storytellers, even when consulting written texts, usually do not use scripts for their performances either in China or in other countries.<sup>144</sup>

Furthermore, although it often includes entertaining folk stories, storytelling in Zhangjiagang is still similar to the recitation of scriptures as a religious practice (hence its name). This practice was widely used in Chinese Buddhism – in the form of literal sūtra recitation (*nianjing* 念經) as well as sūtra telling (*jiangjing*). The first form has survived till now and is widely practiced in monasteries, those in Zhangjiagang area as well,<sup>145</sup> as well as by lay believers in the areas close to Zhangjia-

<sup>142</sup> Chin.: *minjian wenxue* 民間文學; *ZHBJ* 1, p. i. See also Gao Guofan’s discussion of two *baojuan* texts from Jiangsu (including Zhangjiagang) – *Baojuan of Golden Mountain* (*Jin shan baojuan*) and *Baojuan of [Li] Cuilian* 翠蓮寶卷; “Lun *Jin shan baojuan* chaoben de faxian he ta zai “Bai she zhuan” yanjiu zhong de jiazhi” 論《金山寶卷》抄本的發現和它在“白蛇傳”研究中的價值, *Zhong-Han wenhua yanjiu* 中韓文化研究 3 (2000), pp. 231–54; *Dunhuang su wenhua xue* 敦煌俗文化學 (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1999), p. 379.

<sup>143</sup> *ZHBJ* 2, p. 1203. For similar narrative technique in Jingjiang, see Lu and Che, *Jingjiang baojuan yanjiu*, pp. 217–24.

<sup>144</sup> Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1960), p. 79; Victor H. Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China*. (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1989), pp. 111–12.

<sup>145</sup> Buddhist monasteries have always been numerous and influential there, see *ZHBJ* 2,

gang.<sup>146</sup> Che Xilun argues that *baojuan* originated from Buddhist devotional literature, notably *keyi* (liturgies) and “penitence texts” (*chanshu* 懺書). Numerous examples of these from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries have survived. Che traces their origin, in their turn, to the sūtra-telling (also known as “lectures for laity,” *sujiang* 俗講) that flourished in Tang times (607–906) and during the Five Dynasties (907–960).<sup>147</sup> Such texts, the so-called sūtra lectures (*jiangjingwen* 講經文), were discovered in Dunhuang in 1900.<sup>148</sup>

The evidence of Zhangjiagang scripture-telling speaks in favor of Che’s hypothesis of the genre’s origin. We have seen that *baojuan* texts there often make use of Buddhist terminology and ideas, especially in introductory and concluding passages. *Baojuan* in Zhangjiagang preserve introductory and concluding passages dealing with “opening” (*kaijing*) and “concluding the scripture” (*jiejing* 結經), which can be traced to Buddhist liturgies.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, *keyi*, as was said, constitutes a subgenre in Zhangjiagang scripture-telling. It is amazing that the term sūtra- (scripture-) telling was preserved in the name of this performance art; however, the lack of evidence does not allow connecting it with the Buddhist practice of the same name during the medieval period.

Traditionally *baojuan* have been classified by Chinese scholars as a genre of popular literature (*suwenxue* 俗文學). Popular literature is a peculiar category that stands between folklore and written literature.<sup>150</sup> By definition, popular literature includes both texts created by common folk (thus close to folklore, *minjianwenxue*) and then incorporated into the written tradition, as well as works created by literati in imitation of folk literature. Popular literature has broadly understandable content, extensive vernacular/colloquial language, and sometimes is intended for performance.<sup>151</sup> *Baojuan* then is a representative of this sort. Especially in regard to Zhangjiagang texts, the definition of the genre as popular literature is appropriate.

pp. 1479–84.

<sup>146</sup> Schimmelpenninck, *Chinese Folk Songs*, p. 101, 319.

<sup>147</sup> Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, pp. 69, 45–52, 59–63; Che, *Minjian xinyang*, pp. 52–65.

<sup>148</sup> On sūtra telling, see Victor H. Mair, “Oral and Written aspects of Chinese Sutra Lectures (*chiang-ching-wen*),” *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 4 (1989), no. 2 (cumulative 8), pp. 311–34; Sun Kaidi 孫開第, *Sujiang, shuohua yu baihua xiaoshuo* 俗講·說話與白話小說 (Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe, 1956); Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts*, pp. 29–31.

<sup>149</sup> See Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, pp. 69–73.

<sup>150</sup> Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898–1958), *Zhongguo suwenxue shi* 中國俗文學史 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>151</sup> Wu Tongrui 吳同瑞, Wang Wenbao 王文宝, Duan Baolin 段宝林, *Zhongguo suwenxue gailun* 中国俗文学概论 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1997), p. 13. On the complex in-

Texts, which stand on the margins of oral and literate culture, are quite numerous in other cultural traditions, for example in European ancient and medieval literature (the most famous being the Homeric epics). There has been a discussion in Western literary theory concerning the notion of transitional texts, and it is important to look at Chinese materials from this perspective. John M. Foley writes that “the ancient and medieval texts present a special problem in that writing and textualization figured in various ways in their production,” “and in many cases we are no doubt dealing with hybrid or transitional texts.”<sup>152</sup> Authorial or edited written texts may be heavily influenced by the oral performance tradition in terms of composition and function.<sup>153</sup> Western scholars who study folklore in modern societies of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, for example, Kevin J. Hayes, also argue that the definition of folklore in an era of developed technology should not be reduced to orally transmitted texts. Written, even printed materials should be included.<sup>154</sup>

Zhangjiagang storytellers are members of modern Chinese village society, and, just like people of any other profession, extensively use modern technology: xerox machines, computers, and motorcycles to widen their range. It is not surprising that they have employed the advantages of printing and xeroxing. As in the case of materials used by Kevin J. Hayes,<sup>155</sup> *baojuan* texts from Zhangjiagang are not only used in oral performance, but also bear the marks of individual storytellers – notes and corrections. In this regard, one may consider scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang (as well as *baojuan* performances in other regions) to be a special genre of folklore or a transitional genre between folklore and written/authored literature. One should note that this kind of storytelling has strong connections with the religious practice

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teraction of oral and written traditions in Chinese popular fiction, see also Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story; Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1973), pp. 139–47; idem, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1981), pp. 5–13, 20–22, 50–55; Mair, *Tang Transformation Texts*, pp. 86–88, 119–24.

<sup>152</sup> John M. Foley, “Orality, Textuality and Interpretation,” in Alger N. Doane and Carol B. Pasternack, eds., *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages* (Madison: Wisconsin U.P., 1991), p. 36.

<sup>153</sup> On the transitional text, see: Albert B. Lord, “Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature,” in Joseph J. Duggan, ed., *Oral Literature: Seven Essays* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975), p. 24; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (rpt.; New York: Methuen, 1988), pp. 5–30; Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania U.P., 1996), pp. 1–15.

<sup>154</sup> Kevin J. Hayes, *Folklore and Book Culture* (Knoxville: Tennessee U.P., 1997), p. xiv.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

of performance based on written scripture, and also makes use of edited and printed texts.

## CONCLUSION

Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang is an amalgamation of ritual performance and popular entertainment. It has many qualities that are similar to neighboring traditions, especially the well-known Jingjiang scripture-telling, in terms of types of texts, ritual setting of performances, historical development, and textual content. At the same time, certain aspects of the form and contents of texts, and also the organization of performance and ritual setting, are different from Jingjiang scripture-telling. Unlike the *fotou* in the Jingjiang tradition, in Zhangjiagang storytellers employ enriched musical accompaniment and use scripts during the performance. The elaborate musical accompaniment of Zhangjiagang scripture-telling is the result of close interaction with local singing and drama. Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang has connections with folklore and drama, which are certainly stronger than those of the Jingjiang tradition. Because of the use of scripts, scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang may be regarded as more archaic and in this way closer to *baojuan* performances of earlier times, which were widespread in the wider Jiangnan region. In this aspect, one can consider it an earlier stage of this genre's development compared with Jingjiang. Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang also preserves more archaic features in comparison with the reviving tradition of *baojuan* recitation in nearby Baimao.

Therefore, the study of Zhangjiagang scripture-telling can clarify the history and status of the Jingjiang tradition (as well as other similar, nearby traditions). Scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang is a product of the interaction of oral and written traditions. The combination of a large variety of texts and subjects and rich musical quality with the reliance on the written text makes scripture-telling in Zhangjiagang an important phenomenon in the history of Chinese storytelling and performing arts.

*LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS*

- ZHBJ *Zhongguo Heyang baojuan ji* 中國河陽寶卷集 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2007), vols. 1-2.
- ZJB You Hong 尤紅 et al., ed., *Zhongguo Jingjiang baojuan* 中國靖江寶卷 (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenhua chubanshe, 2007), vols. 1-2.





*Figure 1. Scripture-telling Hall*

*April 15, 2009, during festival at the Deity Gao temple, Qingshui village. Note sacred image with the Longevity Star, envelope for the memorial, and icons placed on the wall. All photographs are courtesy of the author.*



*Figure 2. Zhang Yongyin Recites Eight Immortals Wishing Longevity [Scroll]*

*April 15, 2009, during festival at the Deity Gao temple. Accompaniment features both wooden fish and gong (xingzi), seen here.*



*Figure 3. Implements of Scripture-telling*

*Depicted here: xingzi, promptbook, clap block and wooden fish.*



*Figure 4. Scripture-telling with String Accompaniment: Recitation of Mulian Scroll*

*November 3, 2008. Hu Zhengxing is the huqin accompanist and Yu Guanbao the performer.*







*Figure 6. Copy of 1886 Illustrated Edition of Baojuan of Xiangshan  
From Di Tianxin's collection.*